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The creation story in the  
light of to-day







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# THE CREATION STORY IN THE LIGHT OF TO-DAY

BY THE REV.  
✓  
CHARLES WENYON, M.D.

✓  
SECOND EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO





To  
THE MEMORY OF  
MY  
FATHER AND MOTHER





## PREFACE

THIS book consists of a series of sermons preached to a promiscuous congregation at ordinary Church services on Sunday evenings, and, with one exception, they are printed substantially as they were delivered. Whatever of repetition or overlapping may be met with will be thus explained, as will also certain modes of arrangement and expression which would be out of place in a formal treatise.

The advanced student of the Scriptures will find nothing here with which he is not familiar; but for the benefit of those to whom this aspect of the Creation story is new, and who desire a fuller acquaintance with it, the following among standard works easily accessible may, with a grateful sense of personal obligation, be recommended: "Commentaries on Genesis," by Skinner, in the "International Critical Commentary," by Driver, in the "Westminster Commentaries," and by Bennett, in the "Century Bible"; "The Early Tradi-

tions of Genesis," by A. R. Gordon ; also "The Sources of the Doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin," and "The Origin and Propagation of Sin," both by F. R. Tennant, of Cambridge. Many valuable suggestions, especially on the relation between Christian Doctrine and the Theory of Evolution, will be found in Drummond's "Ascent of Man," and in Griffith-Jones' "Ascent through Christ."

Some of the views expressed in these pages are not those of the preceding generation, but, in as far as they are well supported, the acceptance of them may be one way in which we are called to leave the things that are behind, and reach to those that are before. By shovelling the loose sand from the surface we get nearer to the bed-rock of eternal truth. There is a surrender which means acquisition—a taking away which means discovery and revelation ; and the critical study of the Bible, so long as it is patient, reverent, and sincere, can do no other violence to the faith of our fathers than that of plucking off the withered leaves, and lopping off the dead branches—"the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

CHARLES WENYON

HASTINGS.

# CONTENTS

## I

	PAGE
THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR . . . . .	1

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” GENESIS i. 1-2.

“In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” GENESIS ii. 4.

## II

THE MAKING OF MAN . . . . .	32
-----------------------------	----

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them.

“And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” GENESIS i. 26-28.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” GENESIS ii. 7



## III

	PAGE
THE GARDEN OF EDEN . . . . .	56

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden;  
and there he put the man whom He had formed.”

GENESIS ii. 8.

## IV

WOMAN . . . . .	81
-----------------	----

“And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should  
be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

“And out of the ground the Lord God formed every  
beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought  
them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and  
whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the  
name thereof.

“And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of  
the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam  
there was not found an help meet for him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon  
Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and  
closed up the flesh instead thereof:

“And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man,  
made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and  
flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she  
was taken out of Man.”

GENESIS ii. 18-24.

## V

FORBIDDEN FRUIT . . . . .	117
---------------------------	-----

“And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of  
every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou  
shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof  
thou shalt surely die.”

GENESIS ii. 16-17.

# CONTENTS

xi

## VI

PAGE

### THE SERPENT . . . . . 149

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden?

“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” GENESIS iii. 1-5.

## VII

### THE FALL . . . . . 185

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” GENESIS iii. 6.

## VIII

### EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN . . . . . 221

“And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

“So He drove out the man: and He placed at the East of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” GENESIS iii. 22-24.

## IX

	PAGE
RESTORATION IN CHRIST . . .	251

“Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away: behold they are become new.”

2 CORINTHIANS v. 17, Revised Version, margin.



# THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void : and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water.”

GENESIS i. 1-2.

“In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”

GENESIS ii. 4.

# I

## THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

OLD things are not to be lightly thrown away, nor are old stories lightly to be discredited. We may do this to our loss. Only the other day an old garment sold to a second-hand clothes shop for a few pence was found to have four or five hundred pounds' worth of bank notes sewn up in the lining: and some stories that seem threadbare and out of date have teaching for us whose worth is beyond all price. The moral is that we should examine well the old coat before we part with it, and that we should treat with at least the same respect the old story.

This does not mean we are to be satisfied either with our present possessions or our present attainments. We can show due

## 4 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

respect to what is old without disparaging the new. True thrift will lead us, not only to take care of what we have, but to do what we can to add to it. He who loves the truth must have an open mind. Why should we bring our manhood to a standstill in our present unbelief? Yes, and why should we bring our manhood to a standstill in our present faith? At best we only know in part, but most of us are far from knowing all we might know, and loyalty to truth demands that we shall be ever seeking to know more. We ought to keep the windows of our soul open to every part of the horizon, and be ready to welcome new truth from whatever quarter it may come.

The attainment of knowledge is always progressive. Even in the clearest light we cannot see everything at once, and the light itself has not yet reached its meridian. Jesus could not say all He wanted to say to His disciples. They were not yet prepared for it. "I have many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now." When the last book of the Bible was completed God had not finished His education of

the race even in spiritual things. He has not finished yet. A reverent and observant mind may learn new things every day, and it is our duty to try to learn them : but the new must be added to the old, and not taken in exchange for it, or we may be poorer than we were before. Old things often look shabby in the sunshine, and the first effect on some people of new light, especially in the spiritual sphere, is dissatisfaction with what they have already learned, and an impulse to discard it. But light comes to enable us, not to throw the old things away, but to examine them, and thus, perhaps, discover in them a new and unsuspected value. The true wisdom is to let the new knowledge illuminate the old, and the old reflect the new. The old and the new will then help each other, as they should.

Let us look at this old story of the Creation in this way.

Never were we so well equipped for the study of this subject as we are now. Science has succeeded in deciphering the records of the rocks, and reading there in God's own writing



## 6 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

another Creation story which cannot be gainsaid. History has to an astonishing extent reproduced for us the life and times of the ancient Jews, and of kindred Semitic tribes. Literary works contemporaneous with the Scriptures, and even of earlier date, have been unearthed from the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, and the two sets of writings, dealing with the same subjects, can be put side by side and compared. What is called the higher criticism has subjected the style, and language, and composition of the Bible to such a careful, painstaking, and minute examination, that there is no other ancient book in the world whose structure and history are so well known.

These are a few of the elements of that fuller light we possess to-day. How does the old story look in it? Not quite the same as before. Objects seen in the starlight always look different in the dawn, and still more different in the full light of day. We do not expect to read these stories as our fathers did, nor even as we ourselves did in childhood. They have gained far more than they

have lost by their illumination, but they are not the same, and we must adjust our mental standpoint to the change. The noble words of the apostle Paul describe one of the inevitable experiences of intellectual progress—"When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things."

We once thought, perhaps, that this story was written down by Moses at the direct dictation of God, and that, therefore, every word of it was true. But this story does not claim to have been written thus, and there is no basis for such a claim with regard either to this or any other part of the Scriptures. The Jews did not believe this, nor did Christians believe it until towards the end of the sixteenth century, when the Reformers, repudiating the infallibility of the Church, proposed to substitute for it the infallibility of the Bible. In this the Reformers were mistaken, for though both are sacred, and, in a very real sense, both divine, the one is no more infallible than the other. As to the

## 8 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

human authorship of the Book of Genesis, it is not at all likely that Moses had anything to do with it, and, if he had, he certainly did no more than collect some of the material which was made into a book at a much later day.

Whoever wrote the Book of Genesis it is evidently to some extent a compilation. It is made up largely of extracts from earlier writings. These were based upon the common folk-lore of that time, which consisted of legends about real or imaginary ancestors, and myths, which represent the first attempts of man to pry into the unknown, and are one of the earliest forms of poetry. At the very dawn of civilization men began to enquire how the world came into existence, and in the very remotest period of which we have any knowledge there was a tradition upon the subject. Childish and absurd were many of the stories in which the tradition was embodied, but the Hebrews sifted them, selected such as they were led to believe suitable for their purpose, smelted them in the fires of their spiritual judgments, and in the recasting so

transformed them that, as one of our greatest antiquarian authorities has said, to turn from the best of these earlier stories to that before us now is like turning from a monkey to a man.

We have here, as we can see by careful inspection, two different Creation stories side by side. In chapters i.-ii. 4*a* is one story, and immediately following it is the second. Comparing the two together, as we might compare the poems of Chaucer and Longfellow, the Hebrew scholar sees, at once, that the stories are written in the dialects, not only of different districts, but of different times. The second story is evidently by far the older of the two. It is probably one of the most ancient bits of literature in the Old Testament. The first of these two stories was written hundreds of years after the other. It may have been put first as a sort of preface to the book, and it serves to show what were the latest views upon the subject at the time when the compilation was made.

But if these scriptural stories have been put



## 10 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

together in this way, by selecting from earlier stories, many of which were legends and myths, how can we say that the Bible comes to us from God? Just as we say that our daily bread comes from God. Loaves do not drop on to our table from the sky. Through the baker, the miller, and the farmer, they find their way to us from the fields. They are not all of the same quality. One baker produces better bread than another. Yet whichever kind we think of we do not hesitate to say as we look up to God—"Give us this day our daily bread." Man does not live by bread alone. His higher life must be sustained by the word of God, and truth is not the less the word of God because it comes to us through the ordinary channels of human speech, and reasoning, and imagination. Jesus taught the truth of God in parables. In some parts of the Old Testament it is taught in fables. Why should it not be taught also in myths and legends? As a matter of fact truth proved to be divine has come to us in this way. We have an example of this before us now, and



in the fact that a Hebrew sage could take these heathen stories, and, by stripping them of all that was base and degrading, make them vehicles of spiritual teaching such as this, we have convincing evidence of his inspiration.

When we say of certain teaching that it is inspired, we mean that it conveys moral and spiritual information which experience has proved to be essential to the advancement of mankind, and which could not have been found out by ordinary investigation. There is knowledge in possession of us all, and most important knowledge, which has not been obtained by study and research. The great essentials of human life and progress, both in the material and spiritual sphere, must have been known to man from the beginning. If left to find out these things for himself he would have perished in the attempt. Long before man knew anything of physiology, or chemical analysis, he knew what to eat and what not to eat, and the bread upon our table to-day shows how dependent we are still upon information that has come to us

## 12 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

from the very earliest times. How did primitive man obtain this knowledge? It must have come to him as the knowledge of the nutrient elements in barn-floor dust comes to the newly-hatched chick, by what we call instinct, and instinct with us is an involuntary directive power found in our own nature, and so intimately associated with it, that it must have been conferred by the Author of our being. Similar provision has been made for the preservation of our spiritual life. In as far as this was essential for our well-being, God has directly revealed to men the conditions upon which their higher development depends. He has revealed it universally, to some extent, in the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, but far more fully to those whose gifts and training specially fitted them to be the receivers and communicators of such a revelation. We are not far from the true meaning of inspiration when we say that it is instinct applied to spiritual things. As a record of communications thus received we may say confidently that the Bible is inspired.

An inspired book has been defined, by an assailant of the Scriptures, as "one dictated by an infallible God, and so, absolutely true." According to that definition there is of course no such thing as an inspired book in the world. But we cannot guess, or even think out in our study, how God will operate in any department of His work; and to make the results of such guessing and thinking the testing standard of inspiration is absurd. That is the way of the alchemist and the astrologer. The early Chinese physicians, scorning to dissect and see, evolved from their own cogitations a system of human anatomy, and a bronze model at Peking, representing that system, was accepted throughout the country as the standard of normal visceral arrangement. According to that model there is not, and never has been, a normal human being in the world. An arbitrary standard of inspiration is as worthless as an arbitrary standard of anatomy. There is nothing in the world to correspond with either. It is only by the actual study of a class of organisms that we

## 14 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

can know what is normal to it, and so it is not by preconceived opinions, but by the study of actual instances of what claims, and is generally admitted, to be revealed that we can know what revelation and inspiration mean.

We have no authority for saying that the Bible *is* the word of God, but we have the best of authority for saying that it contains the word of God, and, page for page, far more of it than any other book in the world. But the truth has come to us through human channels, and is associated with human imperfections. We have the treasure, but we have it in earthen vessels. In reading these stories, therefore, we must learn to distinguish between the two—the earthen vessel, and the treasure it contains.

To the human element—the earthen vessel—belongs the science of the story. The Jews had no bent for science. Their gifts were of an entirely different order. What they gave us is just that which they of all people were best qualified to give—the knowledge of the



spiritual world. We can work out our science for ourselves.

The two creation stories of the Book of Genesis do not agree with one another. In the second and earlier story it is said that man was created first, and then the inferior animals. In the later story the order is reversed. These statements cannot both be true, and that the two conflicting accounts should be put side by side is an evidence both of the honesty of the compiler, and of his purpose. It did not matter to him which of the two statements men accepted, so long as they grasped the great spiritual teaching which is the same in both.

The whole conception of the universe, upon which these accounts are based, is to be classed with infantile fancies which mankind has long outgrown. At the centre of all things was supposed to be the earth, like a big round plate, with the solid dome of the sky like a basin turned upside down, upon the plate. Men moved about upon the plate, and hanging like lamps on the top and sides



## 16 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

of the basin above him were the sun, and moon, and stars. All around, above, and below the plate and basin was a vast ocean of water. A little of this water from above let down upon the earth through a sort of colander arrangement in the basin was the rain. A heavier downpour might drown the world. We must bear this primitive conception of the universe in mind if we would understand the form of these stories. Both of them suggest that light and darkness are two distinct kinds of vapour, quite independent of each other. They tell us that the light was created before the sun, and the earth before the greater worlds around it. We know now that it was not so. They assign the work of creation to the days of a single week—six days for labour and one for rest. But, in the light of to-day, no one can believe that the universe as we see it now came into existence in six days, or six years, or even six million years, and, as to the seventh day's rest, we know that the work of creation has not ended yet. Astronomers tell us that new worlds are

now in process of formation, and that in every department of nature there is as much activity as ever there was before. God never rests. What would become of us if He did? But Jesus has told us plainly that it is not so. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

These scientific misconceptions, representing the opinions of his time, ought not to interfere in the least with the credit of the writer as a great spiritual teacher. In all fairness we should judge of the story, and of the book as a whole, by the purpose for which they were written. There is no doubt whatever what that purpose was. This Book of Genesis is never referred to by the Jews as a scientific, or even historic treatise, but as the first Book of the Law. That is all which matters in the book. Its supreme object was to declare the foundation of the law of righteousness, and we ought to expect from it no more. If a farmer writes out for me a valuation of a piece of agricultural land, or a flock of sheep, it would be foolish to reject his figures because of his bad writing or his mistakes

## 18 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

in grammar. It is still more foolish to discredit or undervalue the spiritual message of these Creation stories because that message is associated with the erroneous views of nature which belonged to the crude science of that day.

Between true science and true religion there can be no antagonism. When science attacks religion it goes beyond its sphere, and so does religion when it attacks science. They have each their own domain, and they supplement each other. To learn what are the movements, and changes, and interactions, and other phenomena of the material universe I go to science, but to know what is the power behind all phenomena, whence all proceeds, and whither all tends, that is, to know God, and my duty and destiny, I go to the Bible. I can learn these things there as I can nowhere else.

So much for the earthen vessel, let us now look at its contents. What is the spiritual message of the story?

It gives the best explanation ever yet given of the origin of the material universe. "In

the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In our serious moods there is something in us all which vibrates in response to this assertion as a harp-string does to the vibration of a like string in another harp. It expresses in its sublimest form the best that has been thought upon the subject among all races of mankind. An almost universal instinct admits its reasonableness. The world is here with us. There is no doubt of that. We look out upon the blue expanse of sea, or back at our green hinterland, or up at the sun and stars. The world is here to-day, but it is equally certain that it was not always here. We can go back in thought to a period so remote that the very star-mist out of which the worlds were made had not yet appeared. What was there then? Either there was some form of existence or there was not, and, whichever of the two alternatives we choose, questions will be raised to which no one can reply. To say that some one or something existed from all eternity, is to say what is inexplicable, for it baffles human thought to



## 20 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

imagine how anything, or anyone, could be without antecedents. But to choose the other alternative, and, with the solid ground beneath our feet, to say that at the beginning there was nothing, and no one, is to insult our own intelligence. We shrink from the acceptance of the statement that God made the worlds out of nothing, but it is a far more flagrant contradiction to say that nothing made the worlds, or that the worlds made themselves. Everybody laughs at this conception when applied to other things. Topsy, the little slave-girl in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," said she never had a father or mother, and when asked how she came into existence she replied, "I specks I growed." If before the world was there was nothing and no one, then the world came into existence as Topsy thought she did, and the greater the object contemplated the more incredible and ridiculous does such an explanation seem. The wisdom of the world has never been able to improve upon the teaching of this old-world story : "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."



Of the two alternatives, then, we are driven to the first. At the very beginning, in the remotest depths of eternity, there was an existence. The question is, what was that existence? Was it some thing or some one? Which was first, matter or spirit? This story says spirit, and a personal spirit. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Here again is the very best answer that can be given. It is not the only one that has been suggested. In the excitement occasioned by the wonderful scientific discoveries of the latter half of last century, the minds of thinking people were so much disturbed that many of them became agnostics and materialists. To this period belongs Haeckel's "Riddle of the Universe." The object of that book was to present in a modern form the old notion that matter was before spirit, and therefore its cause; which is in effect to say that instead of God making the world, the world made God. An assumption such as this from a gifted and learned man in these enlightened days is not suggestive of intellectual

## 22 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

calmness and sobriety. But the intoxication of that period has passed away, and with it the nightmare of its materialism. Recent discoveries make it appear that even the ultimate atoms of which all things are supposed to be built are but so many bundles of forces and resistances, and that matter itself is a phenomenon of spirit. Every visible thing is a sign and manifestation of a great invisible power behind it. All our leading thinkers are coming to this view now. Modern philosophy insists upon a spiritual interpretation of the universe, and so great is the change in this respect which has taken place in the last few years, that, as a high authority informs us, there is not to-day a single chair of philosophy in any of the universities of Europe or America that is occupied by a materialist. If that is so, the best trained intellects of the world are now in practical agreement with the teaching of this story. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void : and darkness was upon the

face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

In telling us that God made the universe, this Creation story tells us a great deal more. For instance, it tells us that God is one. Here we have another evidence of the writer's inspiration, for this teaching was quite out of harmony with the prevailing opinions of the time. In the surrounding nations were gods many and lords many. The Jews themselves had once believed that Jehovah was only the God of their own land, and that other tribes had other gods. Here we have an altogether different conception. The God of the Jews is the God of the whole earth. In all this vast universe there is one supreme Spirit. "God created the heaven and the earth." "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Experience attests the truth of this conception. The belief in a multiplicity of gods is always now associated with lower forms of civilisation. Apart from the unity of God all attempts at scientific generalisation would be futile. But they are



## 24 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

not futile, and every confirmation of them is another evidence of the fact that universal nature has one uniform system of laws, and therefore one sovereign Lawgiver and Administrator.

This story tells us also that God was before all things. Even if, as it has been said, matter were eternal, God might still be its eternal cause. But every reasonable cosmogony assumes the pre-existence of the divine. "In the beginning God." In this phrase there is no attempt to define the period, but no possible conception of duration can get beyond it. Place the creation of the world as far back as we will, these words still put the Creator first. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth, and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

Then God must be separate from the world. Hindoos speak of God as the sum-total of existing things, and, in some modern speculations in the West, God is defined as a tendency in nature, and is associated so closely with

the material universe that He could not exist without it. But He who existed before the worlds cannot be identified with them; and this old story is quite up to date in its insistence upon the distinction between the Creator and the things He made. When as yet there were none of these things He existed with full creative wisdom and power.

But separateness in this case involves superiority. God is not only before all things, and separate from them, He is above them. The word here rendered *create* is one rarely used in Scripture, and only of the acts of God. It is understood to mean, not so much moulding and fashioning existing things into new ones, but, rather, calling into existence new things—things that did not exist at all before. It conveys the idea of something stupendous and marvellous, and yet done without effort. That is what is represented in this story. God's greatest works are done so easily we can hardly believe He does them. No one sees or hears Him draw the curtains of the night or open them in the morning, and so with



## 26 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

all the chemical and physical and vital forces of the world. God's touch is so light it cannot be observed. Without reflection we might imagine that the universe is automatic, that it works itself. But the true account is that which we have here. For God to will a thing is to accomplish it. "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast."

But if God is before the world, separate from it, and above it, He is also, in a very important sense, in it. He is revealed in it. We can often judge of a man best by what he does. Perhaps we never saw the poet Wordsworth, but we can see his mind, his disposition, his character, his imagination, and his artistic genius in his works. So with painters, and sculptors, and musicians, the best evidence we can have of their character and their resources is in the masterpieces they have produced. The better a man is the more he puts himself into everything he does. So it is with God. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Then what a magnificent record we have here of what

God is! Here we see something of the beauty of His thoughts. The greatest paintings of the world are but imperfect copies of the beautiful things God has put into the scenery of the earth, and into man's heart and mind. What is a picture of a sunrise compared with an actual sunrise? So with God's wisdom, skill, and power. He who creates intelligence must be Himself intelligent, and in a supreme degree. Reason finds so much to satisfy it in the works of nature because reason had so much to do with planning, and creating, them. As to God's skill—our practical physics and mechanics are but an endeavour to learn and to apply to our own purposes the methods and appliances of God. So with divine power. We see it in the trees bending to the storm, and in the tide rushing before a strong south wind upon the shore, as if it would carry all before it; but all this is but like an infant's breath compared with the energy at the disposal of Him "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended

## 28 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance."

God has not only left His impress on the world, He is in the world. Men speak of God creating worlds out of nothing. But this we need not believe. It is not taught in Scripture, and is not intelligible. But, if God was before all things, what had He with which to create the universe? He had Himself. As we have said, He put Himself into what He did, used His own substance as the material for His creative work. The universe is an effluence, not only of the power, but of the very being of God. We speak of the blind forces of nature, but they are all held by the guiding hand of the Most High. God not only created all things, but in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

This story gives us a weird and awful picture of primeval chaos—a great shore-less sea with a pitch-black starless night above it—but the Spirit of God moved upon the

face of the waters, and, as the result, we have the sublime and gorgeous cosmos which the universe presents to us to-day. Empty space and the will of God have given us the mysterious forms of grouped and balanced resistances which appear in material things. God looked into the darkness and it became light. He moved through chaos and the rhythmic beat of His footsteps reduced it to order. The matter, in which He had crystallised His will, He took into His hand and warmed it into life. A breath of His own spirit in the animal made it a man. He spoke to man, and, in as far as man listened and obeyed, he became all that God wanted him to be.

This teaching is the result of divine inspiration. One evidence of that inspiration is the golden thread of spiritual truth which every unprejudiced observer can see running through the crude science and history of these old-world stories. There are not many statements made so long ago which command the respect of the world to-day. This teaching



## 30 THE WORLD AND ITS CREATOR

lives because in every age, in the best of men, there has been an instinctive recognition of its truth. One of the most distinguished scientists of our time has said that he could not imagine, in so concise a form, a better explanation of the probable origin of the material universe than that which is given us in this story. No truly cultured and reverent man or woman can sneer at this story now. It was written for Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue. It was written in the infancy of science, and it naturally makes use of infantile scientific language and ideas, but its spiritual message is a timeless one which no advance of knowledge will outgrow. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

In shaping our conduct, then, and determining our principle of life, surely the fact of God and His relation to the universe is the one fact of supreme importance. Our first duty must be to find out the will of God and do it. To endeavour to run counter to His will in any department of our life is nothing



less than the wildest infatuation. For a mouse, on an ocean steamer in the middle of the Atlantic, to attempt a mutiny against the commander, would not be such a mad-brained thing as it is for us, on this rolling world, afloat on the infinite expanse, to set ourselves against the will of our Creator. He who created can destroy, and we are ever beneath His eye, and completely in His power. Would we know the will of God concerning us, would we have the strength of will to do it, and be released from the penalties of not doing it in days gone by? Then let us put ourselves, as best we can, into relationship with Him who came to reveal to us the Father and to enfold us with His saving love. In fellowship with Jesus this old Creation story will have a new meaning and new music for us. The heaven above us is God's heaven. This is God's earth, and we are intended to be the highest expression of His life upon it, as we are the supreme objects of His love, and the intended heirs of His eternal glory.



# THE MAKING OF MAN

“And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them.

“And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

GENESIS i. 26-28.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul.”

GENESIS ii. 7.



## II

### THE MAKING OF MAN

OF all the works of God referred to in these Creation stories, by far the most marvellous is that we have to consider now, the creation of life—vegetable life, sentient life, and, especially, the self-conscious life of mankind. Thinking of the ever-multiplying, ever-advancing race to which we belong, the question naturally arises: Whence are we? The world has been called into existence by the power of the Creator. How does it come to be inhabited? How is it we are here?

There cannot, of course, be any historic answer to this question; for even if man had come into existence with writing materials in his hands, and with an instinctive skill to use them, he could not have been an actual wit-

ness of his own creation. On the subject of man's beginning there are only two sources of knowledge open to us—two witnesses they may be called—and each is perfectly reliable in its own sphere. One of these witnesses is inspiration, and the other is scientific induction.

By inspiration we mean direct Divine instruction. It is some form of this we refer to when we speak of sanctified instinct, guided reflection, illumined thought, inspired intuition. What unseen wires of communication there may be between the higher faculties of human nature and the source of all truth we do not know, but that there is some such connection we are sure. Mankind has knowledge that can only have come to it in this way. As in the lower sphere of our relation to the material universe God has from time to time raised up men specially gifted to teach the world what it never knew before—men such as Copernicus, Newton, Darwin—so He has raised up specially gifted men to afford us the like guidance in the spiritual sphere. By far the most important of such teaching is that given

us in the Bible. The history of our race shows that the spiritual principles set forth here are at the heart of every real advancement of mankind. One who was a close and greatly gifted student of this Book has well said that not a single item of spiritual teaching in it has ever been refuted. In all that concerns the highest interests of mankind, this is the Book of books. Here, then, we have one witness. The second is scientific induction.

Some say that the Bible is enough, that they find what science they want there, and that they are men of one Book. But he who reads one book only, even though it be the Bible, cannot fully understand that one. It is unreasonable to look for scientific teaching in a great spiritual Book like this. Inspiration is not needed to teach us the composition of the earth or the succession of living beings upon it. These we can find out for ourselves, and in the interests of the growth of human intelligence it is essential that we should. In the

sphere of science and of history, the Bible simply registers the state of knowledge in the world at the time when it was written, and of course that must be widely different from the state of knowledge now. We speak of the Bible as God's Book, and so it is. But it is not the whole of God's Book. Paul could say to those who had never seen the Bible: "Nevertheless God left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons." Science is as much a mode of Divine teaching as inspiration is, and when we speak of the Book of God we should remember that—

"The works of God above, below, within us and around,  
Are pages in that book to show how God Himself is  
found."

We must hear the testimony of both these witnesses if we are to know what we may know of the great subject before us now. What one fails to tell us the other does. Science tells us with clearness and con-



viction the order in which things appeared, and the relation of one to the other. But when I ask by what power and authority and for what purpose this order of succession was secured, science confesses itself unable to reply. Then we turn to this wonderful old Book in which, with that inner ear which is the most important organ of knowledge we possess, we catch the accents of that still small voice which speaks to us from the very heart of things.

Let us then ask these two witnesses to tell us what they can about this subject. When was man made? Of what was man made? By whom was he made, and how? And then, in the light of the answers we receive, let us ask this further question: What more may we expect?

I. When did man first appear? In relation to the other living creatures of the earth, the second and older Creation story tells us that man came first. The later story given in the first chapter reverses the order and puts the creation of man last of all. The results

of scientific observation go to show that this is the true order of succession, the latest living being to appear on the earth was man. How long ago that was no one can say. In neither of the two creation stories is there any hint to show us when the great creative acts described took place. But in the seventeenth century Archbishop Usher, calculating from the supposed ages of the patriarchs, came to the conclusion that the first appearance of man upon the earth was exactly 4,004 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Until recently this calculation was generally accepted, and the figures B.C. 4004 are still printed at the head of the reference columns to these chapters in the Authorized Version of the Bible. According to this reckoning, man came into existence nearly six thousand years ago. The Bible does not say so. These figures, like the division of the Book into chapters and verses, are late editorial additions. Here science comes in to set us right. This witness shows, by evidence which cannot be refuted, that the figures given in our reference Bibles

are not even approximately correct. In what is called the "drift gravel," on the banks of the Thames and other English rivers, have been discovered the rude stone weapons of men, who here in our own country hunted the bison, the elephant, and the lion, a score of millenniums ago. Other remains equally ancient are found in many parts of the world, and as a very long time indeed would be required for men in those rude ages to spread themselves out so widely over the earth, the creation of man must have taken place at an indefinitely remote period. We speak of ourselves as "creatures of a day," and verily the life of the oldest of us is but a span, but as a race we are of great antiquity. There is a long history of divine care and goodness behind us, and Watts's familiar hymn has a far vaster meaning than its composer knew—

"O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home."

II. The making of man took place a long

time ago. Of what was he made? As to man's body, the earlier story says it was made of the dust of the ground; and Paul, writing hundreds of years later, says, "The first man is of the earth, earthy." We have no reason to modify that statement now. The effect of bodily decay might suggest to early observers this conclusion, and it is so true to fact that a German commentator refers to it as "A first attempt at organic chemistry." Of the sixteen elements of which the human body is composed there is not one which is not found in the dust beneath our feet. Some are still offended at the suggestion that our bodily ancestors were apes. But we can trace our descent lower still—trace it to the very lowest level—for both science and the Bible tell us that man's body was made out of the substance of the earth. We speak of certain persons as having risen, and are sometimes foolish enough to despise them for it. But we have all risen—risen from the very dust. "His father was a crossing-sweeper." What of that? If we only go back far enough we can see the original material



of the bodies of us all in the dust which the crossing-sweeper sweeps away. There were Jews who boasted of their lineage, and scorned their alien neighbours, and to rebuke them John the Baptist referred to this Creation story, and reminded those haughty Pharisees that what God had done He could do again, and "of these stones raise up children unto Abraham."

III. By whom was man made, and how? In both these stories the answer is practically the same. "God created man," says one. "The Lord God formed man," says the other. We may expand these answers, but in as brief a form we cannot with all the knowledge of these later days improve upon them.

The agency of man's emergence from the dust was the creative power of God. What else could it be? Some maintain that matter is eternal, and there is nothing in either of these stories to contradict it. But however it may have been with matter, no one can seriously maintain that organic life upon the earth has been eternal. There can be no doubt whatever about man having had a beginning,

At one time there was no organic life of any kind upon the earth, for it was in a condition which made such life quite impossible. The whole earth was on fire. It was itself a fire as the sun is now. It burned like a furnace. The seas and oceans are the condensed steam which once hung over the burning world. You may still see the slag of the furnace in the granite and other fire-fused rocks which incrust the earth to-day. No living organism could have existed then. It would have been turned to vapour in a moment. When at length the fires went out, and the surface of the earth cooled down sufficiently for living creatures to exist upon it, how did those living creatures, and how did man, arise? We owe our existence to our parents, and this generation has sprung from the generation that went before it. We can trace the course of our ancestry back to Saxon, and Celt, and the Aryan forefathers of these, but at length we reach the father and mother of us all. Where did they come from? We are told that they are the result of the development

of lower forms of life, but we want to know first of all how living organisms of any kind came into existence on the earth. Here is this lonely world—an island floating in boundless space, its nearest sister-world twenty-five million miles away—how came living creatures here? For a time the favourite explanation was that matter in certain conditions produces life. We still hear people say that dirt produces vermin, and mud flies. Even if it were so, there would be nothing in this to contraindicate the presence, as originating cause, of an invisible creative power. But it is more than doubtful if living creatures of any kind ever have such an origin. Microscopic investigation and such experiments as those of Tyndall on the high Alps have led to the firm belief that what is called spontaneous generation never occurs now. “Where the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together.” As carrion attracts birds of prey so filth attracts vermin; but to attract is not to create. Plunder attracts thieves, but no amount of plunder can make a thief, and no amount of carrion

can make an eagle, nor can any amount of mud produce a worm. Not even a microbe can arise except as the offspring of another microbe. But the first living organism to appear on the earth could not have come into existence in the ordinary way. It had no parent. What then was its cause? All the wisdom of the ages has never been able to find so good an answer as that we have here. The cause of the appearance of living creatures was the will and power of God. Dust at the beginning and man at the end, the one changed into the other by a creative act of the Supreme Spirit. That is the meaning of the bare outline given us here. It is for us as knowledge increases to fill the outline in.

But if God created man out of the dust, how was it done? Is anything known of the method of our creation? As children we filled up the outline by imagining that God made the dust into clay, and then, as a potter might, He kneaded and moulded the clay into the image of a man to be animated by and by. Grown men and women once thought the



same. Perhaps the author of the older of these two stories did. An ancient Egyptian picture represents God in the act of making man by means of a potter's wheel, and this conception was widely diffused in the ancient world. Of course the Creation story does not say this, and it ought to be impossible for any of us to believe it. Our conception of God is far too exalted to think of Him working in such clumsy fashion. From dust up to man: but this childish way of filling-up the gap between them will not do. How then does science fill it up? By suggesting that lower forms of living organisms, made out of the dust, gradually developed into higher forms, and these into higher still, until at length there appeared a man. This cannot, of course, be proved, but if all the living creatures that have ever lived were placed side by side in the order of their development, towards the higher end of the line it would be hard to say where the mere animal ended and the human began. Physically we are closely related to the lower animals around us. The plan of

our bodily structure, and the conditions of our health and life, correspond with theirs; and nothing is more likely than that man's body is the result of the development of the body of some kind of anthropoid-ape that has long disappeared from the earth. The Bible outline of man's creation, which as children we filled up by the conception of a Divine potter moulding clay, science fills up by evolution. This last is surely the worthier and more helpful view. It is more in harmony with the sublime conceptions of these old stories, and with the doctrine of God's universal and ever-active presence. Some still cling to the superstition that God is above and outside the processes of Nature, and that when He comes He comes only to stop those processes or in some way to interfere with them, but evolution teaches us to see God in the processes themselves. The theory of an ordered evolution demands an evolver. For dust to become man, whether in a moment or a million years, there must be an adequate cause for the tremendous transformation. Evolution describes

the method of creation—God's method of carrying out His preconceived design. As seen in the living creatures of the earth, culminating in ourselves, it constitutes a stronger evidence than we have ever had before of the vast and ordered intelligence that is in and behind the universe. The Supreme Spirit is the moving and directing force of the whole machine. From the dust right up through all the intervening stages to man we see everywhere the effect of the power and wisdom of an ever-present God.

Man was made out of the dust, yes ; but that does not explain him, and we simply cannot explain him without God. Holman Hunt's great picture, "The Light of the World," is in substance just a piece of canvas smeared with various pigments. But that does not explain the picture. For those pigments to be so arranged you must have the artist's hand and mind. We can no more account for man than we can for a picture by simply saying of what materials he is made. The material does not much matter. It may be that other material would have done as well. What does

matter is the painter, the artist, the Creator, God. And so the teaching of this old Book is not only up-to-date, but it commends itself more and more to thoughtful and spiritually minded men—"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth," "God created man."

Man's body is a product of the dust. But he is not body only. Nor are any of the inferior animals body only. Life, even in its lowest forms, means far more than any mere arrangement of matter can explain. Between the vapours of primeval chaos, and the worlds and systems as we see them now, there is not so great an interval as that between dead matter and the lowliest living organism. There is no standard of comparison between matter and life. A tree is far more wonderful than the mountain on which it grows, and the tiniest insect on the tree is more wonderful than the tree, but man is the most wonderful of all. The difference between man and the animals below him is not one of degree only, but of kind. There is something in man which is found nowhere else. The difference is not



due to superior bodily organisation, for our bodies are on the same plane as those of the higher forms of ape, and, as we have seen, may have been derived from them by development. But what an ascent it is from ape-nature to human-nature. The apes are where they have been for ages—living in trees, eating nuts, doing what they have been doing from the earliest stages of their existence. How different it is with men. Physically we are in some respects far inferior to the animals below us. The deer is swifter. The horse is stronger. The dog has quicker scent. The bird has keener sight. But all this only makes the more striking and wonderful the fact of man's unassailable supremacy. As we have seen, this cannot be explained by the structure of our body, nor can it be explained by the size of the human brain. The brain of a man is far bigger than that of a horse or of a cow, and, in proportion to his size, far bigger than that of any other creature. But there are elements of superiority in man which even the size of his brain will not explain.

The author of each of these stories, brooding over this fact, saw and felt that a more than ordinary amount of creative energy must have been expended in the making of man. Each expresses this in a characteristic way. The older writer says that after God had made man's body, He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The later writer, thinking rather of the effect than of the process, says "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." We may have ascended from the dust through the bodies of generations of inferior animals, but what are we now? Evolution has given us our body, but at a certain stage of our physical development, there must have been some special interposition of creative power to endow us with those unique and extraordinary gifts which make us men. The Greeks gave expression to the same belief in the story of Prometheus stealing fire from heaven to infuse into mankind. Obviously there is in man a spark of the Divine, something imparted directly from the Fountain of all being. God

made the world, He made the stars of heaven, but He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life.

IV. We know something of what we have attained, and of what we are now as the result of God's power in man's creation, but what about the future? What more may we expect? The facts we have been considering have more to do with this question than some of us suppose. Isaiah said to his people, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." And, sometimes, looking back at the way we have come, helps us more securely to go forward. The past is related not only to the present but the future, and there is nothing we can know about our origin which does not throw light upon our destiny.

Being made out of the dust, it behoves us to beware of that tendency to degeneration which is our greatest danger—the tendency to fall back to the earth from whence we came. A lifeless body quickly resolves itself into its component elements, quickly crumbles into

dust. So with our nature as a whole. Man is only at his best in an atmosphere of Divine communion, when he is in the true sense of the word religious, aspiring after holiness, and directing his whole life by the highest spiritual considerations. Constituted as we are, nothing can be more fatal to the best interests of a man than irreligion. We live as men by the breath of God, and if, either as individuals or as a community, we cut ourselves off from the source of our life, we begin at once to sink down by the way we ascended—down to the beasts and the dust again.

But in these facts there is not only warning but encouragement. If the dust that is in us reminds us of the risk of degeneration, the breath of God is suggestive of unending development. Made last of all, man is the crown and completion of God's creative work on earth. The human stage was reached, both science and these sacred stories tell us, by a progressive process. Every stage of Creation was an advance on what had gone



before. First a microscopic jelly-fish, then other and higher forms, and last of all man. And since man appeared, in spite of disaster after disaster, he has continued to advance from strength to strength, from glory to glory. Such has been his history, and in this is our hope for mankind. We have not yet reached the end. From the lowest living organism to man means an advance whose measure is beyond our capacity of thought; but between what we are and what we are meant to be means an advance greater still.

In the light of these facts the great question for each of us to ask ourselves is this: Are we working with God or against Him? Are we moving with the years up or down? Backward or forward? Is our course one of retrogression or advance? Where we came from is of little consequence—whether from the apes or directly from the dust; but it is of the utmost consequence where we are going. God has raised us to what we are, but He has not done with us yet. Our evolution is still going on. Let us take care not

to arrest the process. On the spiritual side of our nature the possibilities of growth are limitless. In our frail body is the dust of death, but in the breath of God within us is the promise, and the power of immortality.

# THE GARDEN OF EDEN

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.”

GENESIS ii. 8.



### III

#### THE GARDEN OF EDEN

IF the greatest wonder of Creation was the making of man, the most interesting spot on earth must be the place where that wonder was performed. Let us then, with the guidance of this story, go there in thought, and learn something, if we can, about man's earliest home.

It is only in thought that we can visit it, for its position is not shown on any map, and no one can say where it was. But the place itself is by no means a fiction. It is as certain that man's first appearance was in some definite locality as that it was at some definite time. Somewhere or other beneath the face of the firmament the exact spot lies to-day. But, so far, efforts to find it

have been in vain. Some authorities assign it to one part of the earth and some to another. There is hardly a single quarter of the globe, from Australia to the North Pole, in which it has not been located. The crude geographical details given in the tenth and four following verses of this chapter do not help us much, and are probably a later addition to the story. Two known rivers are mentioned, the Tigris and the Euphrates; and two unknown rivers, the Pison and the Gihon, which some have tried to identify with certain canals in Mesopotamia, and others with such great rivers as the Nile, the Indus, and the Ganges. Whatever rivers may have been in the writer's mind, they are all four represented as arising from a single source in the midst of the garden, which is, of course, quite impossible.

The basis of the Eden story is most likely an ancient myth which in various forms had wide currency among the people of the East. Its rich colouring suggests that it took its present form in Babylonia, which in early

times was noted for its parks and gardens. Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew race, came from that region, and he would bring with him and hand down to his descendants glowing accounts of the rich vegetation, and wonderful trees, and abundant fruits of what was then one of the most fertile portions of the earth. With him may have come that form of the myth which enters into the composition of this story. Its author most likely lived somewhere among the luxuriant palm-groves on the banks of the lower waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, and he seemed to suppose that the magic garden of his dreams was away up in the mysterious northern mountains from which those rivers came. But the very place where he was dreaming, the beautiful plain of Babylonia itself, was at least as likely as any other place on earth to have been the cradle of the human race.

The meaning of this story is quite independent of locality, and to get the full benefit of its teaching it is no more necessary to

know where Eden is, or was, than it is to know into what far country the prodigal son wandered, or to what inn the good Samaritan carried the man who had fallen among thieves, before learning the lessons of two of the most beautiful stories of the New Testament.

But if we cannot tell from this story where man's first home was, no more can we tell from it what that home was like. Let us be fair to him who wrote this story, and to Him under whose direction this was done. We have here a poet's picture. The facts it deals with have been seen with a poet's eye. To take the story as an actual description of the beginning of man's career would be to misinterpret it. Allegorical narrative may, like the "Pilgrim's Progress," be perfectly true, and of the greatest importance, though its meaning does not appear on the surface. The spiritual teachings of the Bible are being shown by new proofs every day to be infallible, but not the forms, and figures, and imaginings, by which that teaching is conveyed. These are but the gilded wood in



which the reverent human mind has tried to frame the Divine picture. They are the man-made, perishable casket in which the God-given jewel is contained. We may change the frame and casket if we wish, but we must retain at all costs the picture and the jewel.

What then are the things of priceless value in this story? It must have a deep significance, for it is not merely a Hebrew story. In one form or another it is co-extensive with the human race. Long before the Bible in its present form began to be written men were telling this story to one another. One of the earliest Greek writers, describing the five ages of the world, represents the first as the golden age—an age in which men lived in perfect happiness on the fruits of the untilled earth, suffering from no bodily infirmity, and only in extreme old age passing away in gentle sleep to be the spirit guardians of the world. We find similar stories in the still earlier traditions of the Persians, the Hindoos, and the Chinese. A universal tradition such

as this, must have important teaching for us. What is it ?

An answer to this question is suggested by comparing one of these two stories of Creation with the other. So far, all that has been attributed to the Creator has been unlimited power and wisdom, an infinitely authoritative will, and beautiful thoughts. The Creation of the world and man implies all these, but we have yet to learn something of God's character. This comes into view in that part of the Creation narrative we are considering now, and it is instructive to note how differently but how harmoniously this subject is dealt with in the two stories. In the later story given in the first chapter there is no mention of the garden of Eden, but we observe there a striking statement, frequently repeated, "It was good." We have it in the fourth, tenth, twelfth, eighteenth, twenty-first, twenty-fifth verses, and then emphatically in the thirty-first, "God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." That phrase sums up God's character as revealed in His

works, and what a wonderful summing-up it is! At the fourth verse of the second chapter the earlier Creation story begins. In this story the statement that what God did was good does not once occur, but instead of it we have this account of the garden of Eden. This takes the place in the one story of the reiterated assertion in the other. It was God's goodness that these old-world stories—whether of golden age, or magic garden, or earthly paradise—were groping after. It is that which is presented in the object-lesson given in the beautiful story before us now. God not only manifested power, and wisdom, and force of will in making man, but goodness, too; and we may rest assured that all which creatures like ourselves can reasonably expect from perfect goodness has been, and is, and will be ours.

The Eden story, like the cruder stories which preceded and led up to it, records a half-understood reminiscence, coloured by a half-understood experience, and a half-understood anticipation. It suggests a look

backward, and also a look forward and around, and so has a relation, not only to the past, but to the present and the future.

I. It refers directly to the past. In this aspect, the story is so human that there must be few of those who have reached middle life whose heart does not accord with it. We have had an Eden story of our own. Our early days seem in some respects to have been our best days. They may not have been our most affluent days, and perhaps we lived in a cottage then which is a great contrast to the commodious dwelling which is our home to-day. But somehow the sun does not seem to shine so brightly now as it did then, nor does the sky seem quite so blue, nor the flowers so beautiful. "When I was a boy," says the aged man,—and how his eye glistens at the thought! "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," the mature poet sings. Looking back through the haze of years at the earliest time he can remember, that is how it seems. What is more natural than to look in the same way at the dawn of human



history? Instinct prompts us to do this, and it is this instinct, in seers and prophets, which has given us the story in which the teaching that instinct was intended to reveal, is crystallized for the enrichment of the world. "The Lord God planted a garden, . . . and there He put the man whom He had formed."

Then God not only created man, but took care of him from the beginning. It is said there is a special Providence over little children, and so there was over the childhood of our race. This is one of the things the writer of this story is trying to express. There was a special Providence over the infancy of mankind. It must have been so. Man's very survival on the earth, and still more his progress, are a sure proof that he was started well, that God not only knew what was best for man but did it.

If so, we may be sure, as this story suggests, and science confirms, that man appeared just at the right time. He was sent into a world specially prepared for him, and everything was ready for him when he came.

Man, as we have seen, was the latest living being to be created. He came latest because he required most. All that was done previously was preparatory to this. Whatever else God did, man was in His thoughts. The world must be fitted to be man's dwelling-place. The monster reptiles and huge mammals of the earlier period, having fulfilled the purpose for which they were called into existence, must give place to higher forms. Forest after forest must grow up and decay to provide us with the supply of fuel we have in our vast coal measures. A climate, now of scorching heat and then of excessive cold, neither of which man could have endured, must become milder and more equable. Then, when all was ready, and not till then, man was called on to the scene. Some of the most fragrant and beautiful flowers, roses among them, made their appearance at about that time. So did wheat. This invaluable cereal grows in all sorts of climates and all sorts of soils, but has never been known to occur anywhere except as the result of cultivation. No one

has ever found it wild. It is a product of vegetable evolution, and that a stage of development which could only be artificially maintained should have been reached, just when there came into existence a being instinctively qualified to cultivate it, is nothing less than a miracle of wise and generous forethought. The writer of the Creation story was not acquainted with these facts, but the principle which underlies them is plainly enough set forth in his simple poetry: "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed."

But the story teaches us further that man's appearance was not only rightly timed but rightly placed. He was set down in the spot most favourable for his existence and development. In certain waters we find particular kinds of fish, and in certain climates and situations particular kinds of beast and bird, each thriving in the locality, and atmosphere, and element, that suits it best. And the shrewd author of this ancient record tells us

that God placed the first man in a garden. He was quite sure that God would put him in a place that was fitted for him, and he has given poetic expression to that conviction in this way. We do not suppose for a moment that man began life in what we understand by a garden, but there is no doubt that he did begin life in a specially fertile and genial portion of the earth. He required some kind of food that was ready for immediate use, and so there must have been fruit trees within his reach. He required warmth, for without the natural covering of the inferior animals, man would have perished in the cold if he had been first set down in a climate such as ours. He required some place of shelter from savage beasts, for, until provided with artificial weapons, man is one of the most defenceless creatures on the earth. He required something to appeal to and draw out his love of the beautiful, and, above all, something which would help to lift his thoughts to God. The Creator must have anticipated these requirements, and provided



for them, and, so, He not only took pains in making man but also in preparing his environment. We do not suppose that man was better, or better off at the beginning than he is now, but, according to his simple needs, he did come into existence in favourable circumstances. This is one thing the old poet has to tell us, and, in as brief a form, he could not have expressed it better. "The Lord God planted a garden, and there He put the man whom He had formed."

II. The story has also a relation to the present. The poet-sage is unconsciously depicting, from some of his own half-understood experiences, essential elements in ideal human life. We have by nature a love of gardens and of flowers. There is no civilization in the world which is not associated in some way with agriculture and horticulture. If man is not placed in a garden he soon begins to make one round about him. Follow him to Australia, or the Western prairies, or the wilds of Siberia, and you find him breaking up the fallow ground, and, in

obedience to this divinely implanted instinct, making the very desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. This instinct is very persistent. It clings to men amid the bricks and mortar and the squalor of our large towns. Some of the most unlikely looking houses in the poorest parts of London have their patch of garden at the back. Even in the grimiest of slum dwellings there is often a plant growing in the window. These little gardens beneath the smoke, and these flowers in the garret window, are bits of Eden, reminding us, not only of where we have come from, but of what God has done for us and what He has for us now.

So long as a man cherishes a taste like this he is not in a state of hopeless degradation, even in the slums. In this old garden-story there is practical teaching for our own day. The love of natural beauty is an instinct to be fostered. Garden and flowers are good for us. God never meant men and women to be cooped up in stuffy rooms, with dingy streets as their only recreation ground, and nothing

but piles of masonry to look at all day long. Consumption is not the only disease for which the cure is plenty of fresh air. The building of garden-cities and the opening of public parks in our great centres of population tend not only to improve the health of the people, but their character as well. "Back to the Land," is not a mere precept of political economy: we hear in it the voice of God. If the masses of people who, year after year, are pressing into our already overcrowded towns and cities could, with or without the assistance of the Government, obtain somewhere in the country little plots of land to cultivate, it would be, both physically and morally, for the immense advantage, not only of the individuals concerned, but of our country and of the world.

The Eden story has a relation to the present also in the Divine Providence, of which it reminds us in our own personal life. It is said of Jesus that He came in the fulness of time, that is, He came when the world was ready for Him and His mission.

As with the second Adam, so, in this respect, it was with the first, and so it is with the lowliest of the sons of men. We speak of some as being before their time, and of others as being behind their time; but the fact is, every man appears at exactly the right time—the time most suited for the life God wants him to live and the service God wants him to render.

And so with regard to the place of our appearance. We may mar it by our misconduct, but it is the right place. There is much in the confusion of the world and, sometimes, much in our own experience to shake our confidence, but in this Eden picture there is much more to reassure us. In the personal history of every one of us there have been such unmistakable evidences of Divine goodness that, even in our darkest hours, when all things seem to be against us, it is far more rational to believe that we have misunderstood our experiences than that God is either indifferent or unkind.

God has made provision for every man.



The whole earth is the garden of the Lord, and every man has a right to what he requires of the fruit of it. There are, alas! starving people in the world. There are starving people in our own country, and by no fault of their own. It is not He who planted the garden who is to blame for this. There is fruit enough and to spare. When innocent people starve it is because of the selfishness of their fellow-gardeners who want more than their own share. The same forethought which was exercised on behalf of the first man has been exercised on behalf of every man. Who is there who has not at some time or other in his life said with the Psalmist: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage"? But for our own or others' wilfulness we might say it always, for this is part of the life-story of us all: "The Lord God planted a garden, and there He put the man whom He had formed."

III. This story has a relation, not only to the past and the present, but to the future.

It has a forward look, and expresses a half-understood anticipation of what God has laid up for us. The traveller in mountain regions often has the experience of finding that some upland valley, or hilltop, which has been all day behind him, at length appears in front, and proves to be the very spot to which he is going. The same thing happens, sometimes, in the experiences of the soul. What has been a memory becomes a hope.

The early Jews had only the vaguest notions of immortality, but the Eden-myth served as a nucleus, around which their thought upon the subject gathered, until it took definite form. It is said that the impossible river-system of the story, is an attempt to map out on the earth, what had been observed above, in that mist of stars which streams across the firmament, and which we have named the Milky Way. The tradition of the later Jews represents Eden as having been created before the earth, and, therefore, independent of it. And so the picture has gradually veered round from east to west, until

the garden of the beginning of man's history has become, what it is in the New Testament, his goal: not a place behind us, that we have left and lost, but one that lies on before. With other forms of this story among ancient peoples it is the same. There is that in them which can only be a reflection of the light above, and to that extent they are forecasts of our destiny.

Our wistful musings about what seems like a lost garden of delight are whiffs of fragrance from a Paradise we are approaching. A line, already quoted from Wordsworth's wonderfully beautiful and suggestive poem, lingers in our ears, and we feel, with the poet, how true it is that the "Heaven" which lay "about us in our infancy" has permanently extended our range of spiritual vision, and given us an abiding sense of the vastness and mystery of our nature:—

“ Those shadowy recollections

    . . . Have power to make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of the eternal silence.

Hence in a season of calm weather,  
Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither."

With maturity has come a measure of disillusionment. The romance of our early years has gone. We look at things around us now with other and soberer eyes, and

"Nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower."

But among the precious things our vanished past has bequeathed to us for ever, are "the primal sympathy which having been must ever be," and "the faith that looks through death."

A consumptive girl sinking into her last feverish sleep, in a London slum, and with almost her last gasp, said: "Mother! can you smell the violets?" Some sweet Eden of her childhood wove itself into her delirium, and a scene of happiness and beauty, which she had thought to be behind her, and far away, was there before her, and close at hand.



Beauty and the spirit world are never far apart, for beauty is truth, and truth is eternal, and so not to poets and scholars only, but even to quite simple folk, in certain moods—

“The meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

The very capacity to appreciate natural beauty is significant of much. No other living creature on the earth ever raised its head to admire the play of colours on the sea, or the rose tints of the dawn above the distant hills. It is to man only these things appeal. We all have to some extent the power to admire the beautiful. The better we are the more we admire it, until we come at length to crave for perfect beauty—beauty not only of outward form, but of character and life. Such a craving must have somewhere its means of satisfaction. Where is it? Look not behind you! Look forward! Look up! The satisfaction we want is there.

From what God has done for us at the

beginning, we may be sure He is going to deal well with us at the end. If you give your child such a full basket when he sets out on his long walk to school in the morning, he knows you will have something good for him when he comes home at night. He who has spent so much upon his infant's cradle is not likely to be niggardly when his son comes of age. God would not have done what He has done for us if He had meant to destroy us. Every blessing received at His hands is a promise of blessings yet to come, and the crowning benediction of this old story is the increased confidence with which it enables each one of us to say: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

# WOMAN

“ And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an help meet for him.

“ And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air ; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them : and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

“ And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field ; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept : and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof :

“ And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

“ And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

GENESIS ii. 18-24.



## IV

### WOMAN

GENERATION after generation of human beings, through centuries and millenniums, have read this story, but like other works of art which increase in value with their age, it was never, perhaps, so significant as it is to-day.

In it the author, whose name has for ages been forgotten, gives us a poetic word-picture of the origin, and value, and relation to the race of what we are accustomed to speak of as the more angelic half of our humanity.

We do not use the word *angelic* lightly, for it is evident that this ancient story moves on a high level. He who first told it must have been a very reverent and pure-minded man, for though what he says is in vital

touch with the everyday life of all of us, yet in spirit and in motive it might refer to another world. It looks far beyond what is merely animal and physical, and the sex questions of the Society novelist, and the Divorce Court, are almost as remote from this old writer's point of view as they are from that state of existence in which, though shared both by men and women, Jesus says : "They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God."

The two points around which the incidents of this story group themselves are these : God's recognition of man's need of companionship, and the provision for that need.

The need and the provision for it are mutual. In a very important sense man is to woman what woman is to man, and the teaching given us here embraces both sides of the relationship.

I. Companionship is asserted to be one of the essential needs of human nature. "It is not good for man to be alone." To this we at once assent, but only those who have had

experience of solitude can understand how unbearable to most natures it is. Defoe is keeping close to fact when he tells us, in "Robinson Crusoe," that a genial climate and beautiful scenery and abundance of pleasant food cannot compensate for the lack of a companion. "Afar in the desert I love to ride," sings the poet, but he does not forget to add, "with the silent bush boy alone by my side." "Oh that the desert were my dwelling place!" Yes: "But with one fair spirit for my minister." Even among criminals it is not hard labour but solitary confinement which is the severest form of punishment. In town life we are not always conscious of how much we depend for our peace and our enjoyment upon association with our fellows. But to seek such association is an instinct with us. It is this instinct which has made London and other towns and cities, and which gives such fascination to crowded thoroughfares and large assemblies.

To be alone is not good for us physically. We can perhaps manage to live in isolation,

but it is extremely difficult to live comfortably without outside assistance. We cannot be in two places, nor do two things, at once; and it is only by division of labour, by a number of persons co-operating, that some things can be done at all.

It is not good for us intellectually. We never see ourselves, except in the reflection of a mirror, and we only know the outer aspects of human life as we see them in other people. It is to companionship that we owe the arts of speaking, and writing, and reasoning, and all the most wonderful developments of our civilisation.

And it is not good for us spiritually. Such graces as courtesy, gentleness, kindness, forbearance, helpfulness, self-sacrificing love, and other important elements of Christian character have no meaning apart from companionship. We are apt to underrate the importance of so-called "meetings for Christian fellowship" in the Church, but, after all, such meetings only represent the application of one of the fundamental facts of human nature to



matters of the soul. Whether in the Church or out of it, whether in our work or our play or our religion, it is not good for man to be alone.

And companionship suitable for man must be of a special kind. It is not anything in our lower nature which gives this need its greatest urgency, and nothing in our lower nature can satisfy it. The old teacher has a quaint way of portraying this. Man is described as being for a time the only living creature on the earth, and then, to relieve his loneliness, God is said to have created the beasts of the field, and the cattle, and the fowls of the air, and to have brought them to the man that he might make friends with them. But only to a very limited extent could this be done, and with all the living creatures of the earth in view, still for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. We have here a graphic representation of the vast interval which separates the highest of the inferior animals from man, but the author of the story means much more than this. He is

seeking to show that what gives its highest value to that part of the Creation we are considering now is something far removed from what is merely animal, whether in the living things below us or in ourselves. No gratification of the senses will suffice. A satisfactory all-round companionship that shall become dearer as months and years roll by, demands qualities possessed only by a spiritual creature, one who is the offspring of a nature into which God has breathed the breath of life. The only help meet for man is a fellow human being.

In recognition of our need of such companionship, and of its unspeakable value, God has made the preservation of our race depend upon it. Without it there can be no succession of human beings. The solitary individual dies and leaves no descendants. In his or her direction the race extends no farther. In the resources of the Almighty there must have been numberless other ways in which mankind might have been preserved. But God has chosen, we may be sure, the best

way, the way which leads to the greatest number of advantages, and so it comes to pass that our humanity has been enriched for ever by all the precious things associated with the name of woman.

II. God has provided man with the companionship he needs. The supply of animals as friends not proving satisfactory, "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept ; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man." It is unfair to this old-world writer, and to the God he served, to regard this narrative as history. There is no reason to suppose that he himself intended it to be so regarded. It embodies spiritual teaching of permanent and priceless value, but to understand the story we must read it as we read the Prophet Ezekiel's story about the wheels with many eyes, or the strange visions of the Book of the Revelation. Indeed, if we could bring ourselves to read

the first book of the Bible as everybody reads the last we should not be far wrong.

The first sentence should save us from the mistake of giving to the narrative a literal interpretation. "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept." It is admitted that the man was not in a position to describe the course of events. God did His work, as He generally does, unseen. The man found the woman at his side, but how she came to be there he no more knew than how he came to be there himself. But, of course, this could not prevent the author of the story from putting questions to himself. It could not prevent him from thinking and wondering. And this is the picture his fancy drew. It conveys under its archaic symbolism truths which the experience of a hundred generations has confirmed; but in its form it is a myth, and to treat it as a record of actual facts is grossly to misinterpret it. It is a child's story, and takes us back to the childhood of the world; and however we twist the meaning of the words, making *rib* mean *side*, or



whatever else, it is historically and scientifically valueless. There may be people still who imagine that a man has one rib less than a woman, or one less on the left side than the right. But the fact is, on either side, both in man and woman, the number is the same—a round dozen. Irregularities of course occur. In some cases there is an extra rib, making the number thirteen, and in other cases there is a rib short, reducing the number to eleven. It is possible that the discovery of a skeleton with this deficiency gave rise to the story. But no serious and unbiased student of the works of Nature can think of attributing to the Most High child's play such as this. The writer of the later account of the Creation given in the first chapter of this Book of Genesis did not thus confuse the meaning of the earlier one. He allowed it to be published with his own, because of its spiritual teaching, but he assumes that the woman was created in the same way, and at the same time, as the man. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God

created He him : male and female created He them."

All therefore that has been said about the making of man applies equally to the making of woman, and need not be repeated. But this rib portion of the story has teaching for us of its own, and teaching of great importance.

1. It makes vivid to us the fact of the fundamental unity of a woman's nature and a man's. "One of his ribs." The teller of the story seems to think that both were originally part of a single organism, and he was right as to the fact, however wide of the mark as to the date. If we go back far enough in the course of our development, from men to apes, and from apes downwards to those lowly forms of life which appear but as specks of animated jelly, we do find creatures in which there is no sex distinction. Male and female are combined in one individual life. The one sex was divided from the other, ages before the human stage was reached, but it is strictly true that in their origin and essential nature the two are one.

This is further emphasised by the words, implying an instinctive recognition of the fact, on the part of the astonished Adam, when his wife first appears. There is a beautiful rhythm in the phrases, and to understand anything of their force in a translation they must be paraphrased. Animal after animal, noble in form and graceful in movement, has been presented to the man in vain. But the woman comes, and he exclaims: "At last! Another and better self! This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman—*man-ess*—for she was taken out of man."

2. But the story insists that with this unity of origin there has been great divergence. The rib, God made into woman—something altogether different. It would tend to the wiser use of our resources, both in public and in private, if we could always recognise as clearly as did this old-world writer the deep and radical dissimilarity there is between a woman's nature and a man's. There are

effeminate men, and there are masculine women, just as there are parts of the torrid zone so close to the temperate zone that there is nothing to choose between them. But, all the same, there is a torrid zone and there is a temperate zone, and so there is a distinctly defined masculine and feminine soul. The ideal man is strong in body and strong in will, bold, aggressive, resistant, determined. The ideal woman is more delicately built, and, in disposition, is gentle, retiring, adaptable, acquiescent, winsome, affectionate.

The work of the ideal man is to go far afield, to work, to discover, to conquer, to take possession. While the work of the ideal woman is, as Ruskin says, "to reward man for his pains, and arrange, and dispose and beautify what he has won."

There is something of each in both. The masculine and feminine natures are to a certain extent identical. There is at least a rib's weight of the distinctive masculine temperament in woman, and there ought to be more than that amount of the feminine



temperament in man. The better sort of man has a good deal of woman's gentleness, and the better sort of woman has a good deal of man's determination. It is the preponderance of one or the other which determines the characteristic temperament.

The difference between the two natures is not in the extent or richness of their endowments. Both sexes are equally well qualified for their own special work. There is, to a certain degree, the power to do the work of either, in both. At a push a man can do the work of the house, and, at a push, a woman can command a ship, or even lead an army. A woman can, perhaps, do a man's work better than a man can do a woman's. But there is a well-marked-out sphere of service for each, and as the highest welfare of mankind depends on everything being done as efficiently as possible, it is obviously to the general interest of us all that each sex, instead of seeking to tread in the footsteps of the other, should strike out its own line of advance and development, and, as far as

practicable, set itself to do, not only what it can do, but what it can do best.

In this we recognise that call of God which we speak of as the responsibility of sex. Each sex has its own special contribution to make to the moral and spiritual life of the world. We cannot afford to be without either, and, least of all, without that of the woman. The more manly the man, and the more womanly the woman, the better it is for the race. In creating woman God opened to our humanity, not physically only, but above all, mentally, and morally, and spiritually, altogether new resources—resources we have in her alone. Human nature does not mean masculine nature, nor feminine, but both combined. The one supplies what the other lacks. They are complementary to each other. Special calls may come in certain circumstances either to man or woman. Emergencies may arise which require even the claims of sex to be surrendered, and such calls must be, at all costs, obeyed. But generally, to disregard sex distinction in the

work of life is to put back the civilization of the world.

3. Keen observers may detect in this story a suggestion that woman is not the mere equal of man, but in some respects his superior. If so, this is an evidence of its great antiquity. Such a suggestion cannot have originated with the compiler of this Book of Genesis, nor yet with the author of this story in its Hebrew form, both of whom would share with the rest of the Jews and other Oriental people of that day, such opinions about woman as would have made it impossible for them to think of placing her on a level with man. There was a marked increase of this sex bigotry in the course of Jewish history, and, at about the time of Christ, it was at its worst. In the remoter past woman was much respected, and in the earliest code of laws of which we have any knowledge, a much more honourable position is assigned to her than under the later Mosaic dispensation. There are signs that in still earlier periods her

status was higher still. It is significant that most of the objects of worship among primitive Arabs were female, and still more significant that a goddess was the supreme divinity of Assyria, and another goddess the supreme divinity of Babylonia. When the conception of such divinities arose, woman must have been held in high esteem. This myth of woman's creation, in its earliest form, may have originated at that time, and the venerable record, as we have it here, does bear traces of the old gold of an earlier woman-revering chivalry. It represents woman as being made of better material, the dust being first refined into a man, and then, by a further process of refinement, made into a woman. And she is said to have been made at a later stage of Creation. So, indeed, in this older story were the inferior animals. But woman is on an altogether different plane from theirs, and, being made last of all, would seem to imply that we have in her the finishing touch at the temple of humanity, and that she is Creation's masterpiece, the climax of Nature's evolution.



The method of showing this is fanciful, and takes us far away from actual fact, but there is a good deal of truth in the suggestion. He who adapted this story to the requirements of the Sacred Book was wiser than he knew. Unwittingly he has told us that of which he was not himself aware, and all that is intimated in the story, of higher refinement, and further improvement, and a stage nearer perfection, in woman's nature, is more in harmony with the best thought of the world to-day than it has ever been before.

We speak of woman as the weaker vessel, and we have the highest authority for doing so. But if she is weak where man is strong, she is often strong where he is weak, and it is just those qualities in which woman is strongest which are most heavenly and divine. We learn what God is from what we are, and woman's side of the revelation is not the less important. If God were only known as man reveals Him—always excepting One—we might be content to say with the author of the Book of Exodus, "The Lord is

a man of war." But the last and fullest revelation tells us that "God is love," and we can learn what that is from woman best. All the distinctive Christian graces seem to come more naturally to a woman than to a man. "And now abideth faith, hope, love—these three." Faith means trust, and it is a woman's nature to be trustful. So with hope. When men are out of heart, and ready to give up, it is often a woman's hopefulness that saves them from despair. And as for love—why, that is woman's characteristic grace. She is richer than a man in all the graces, but she is richest in that which is best of all. If this be so, then for a woman to give up any of her own distinctive qualities to grasp at those of a man, is to exchange gold for silver, and silver for lumps of clay, and the whole world is the poorer for the bargain.

4. The writer of the story evidently thought that, to be and do her best, woman required a special environment; so he represents God as delaying her creation until the

garden was planted, and the man ready to take care of her. Experience has justified this insight. The larger liberty, rightly accorded to woman in our day, must be associated with special moral and spiritual vigilance, if society is not to lose more than it gains by this enfranchisement; for side by side with the noble army of women workers, who, in various departments of learning and philanthropy, are rendering such invaluable service to mankind, we see arising a type of irreligious woman, never seen before, never seen now beyond the bounds of Christendom, and which threatens the very foundations of our civilization.

Woman is too finely made, too highly strung, too sensitive, to be allowed to rough it like a man. If the peaches are to ripen they must face the sun, and be protected from the blight of the east wind. Exposed to hardships, and to influences coarse, and hard, and debasing, it is always the woman who suffers most. Whatever her position in life, the chivalrous consideration of the

stronger sex must not be relaxed if she is to attain her full efficiency.

However important the part woman is called to take in public affairs, it is in the family she is most effective, it is there she is supreme. The lighthouse-lamp which burns to bless the mariners at sea is shut up in a lantern. It has to be shut up if it is not to be extinguished by the gale. What the lighthouse lantern is to the light within it, that is home, or some corresponding shelter, to a true woman. She may be tempted to fret sometimes at the restrictions imposed upon her by domestic duties, but better be a light shut up in a lantern than a light blown out. The woman who takes her own work seriously, rejoicing in her home as her own special sphere, doing her best to make and keep those who depend upon her good and happy, will have an influence of immeasurable range. Her children will rise up to call her blessed, and the members of her household will carry the radiance of her character and life wheresoever they may go. With such women in



the home it must be for ever true that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

5. "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man." Thus the author of the story calls attention to the necessary concentration and consequent limits of this kind of companionship. There is no direct teaching of monogamy in the Bible, but it is assumed here and elsewhere. He brought her unto the man—the man of whose rib she was made, to him and to him only she belonged, just as he belonged to her. The unit of humanity is a wedded pair. Home is itself a special creation. It belongs only to the human sphere. There is nothing like it outside. The pairing of birds is usually only for a season. With the fledging of each brood it is dissolved. Marriage is for life. One man and one woman, the twain made one for ever by the Divine bond of wedlock, that is God's ideal for the human family upon earth.

6. The story teaches that marriage is the

highest and divinest state both for man and woman. What is called single blessedness is blessedness of an inferior kind. A certain hostel for young men at a seaside resort is sometimes advertised as an "Eveless Eden." But no Eden is complete without its Eve. You cannot have a real home unless there is a woman in it. Some Churches forbid their priests to marry, and they seek to invest celibacy in others with special sanctity. But such teaching is as much opposed to common sense as it is to the Word of God. For some men and women who are called to render urgent service to the State, or to occupy difficult posts upon the mission field, it may be expedient, and even absolutely necessary, to live a single life. But, apart from circumstances that are quite exceptional, for normal men and women, the married state is in every way the better.

For what appear to be purely selfish reasons some men refuse to accept the Eve God has provided for them. They are unwilling to submit to the restrictions and

to pay the price of marriage. That there is something to pay cannot be denied. It ought not to be expected that a blessing such as this can be had for nothing. In Oriental lands a wife must be obtained by purchase, and in one way or another it is always and everywhere the same. To the Adam of this story the cost of a wife was one of his own ribs. But we are told he did not feel parting with it, and certainly he received far more than a rib's worth in return. With the right kind of affection a truly manly soul makes the required surrenders quite unconsciously, and has no other feeling afterwards than one of profound thankfulness that such an invaluable treasure has been obtained on such easy terms. Most of the great and good men of the world have been married men; and few, if any, have made much out in any sphere without being largely indebted, directly or indirectly, to a woman's influence and a woman's love. Without a good reason—and selfishness is the very worst of reasons—it is no credit to a man to prefer to live alone.

“He does not truly love himself, who does not love another more.”

A wife is the gift of God. “The Lord God brought her unto the man.” The thought of this should make it impossible to speak or even think with lightness or flippancy of a relationship so holy. Confetti, and the behaviour too often associated with it, would seem altogether out of place if we were really aware of the Divine element in such a union. The Roman Catholic Church regards matrimony as a sacrament, and to the Apostle Paul it is the best earthly representation of the mystic union between Christ and His Church. “The greatest of these is love.” Yes; and of all the innumerable forms of love, the love between husband and wife is the most beautiful, the most lasting, the most Divine.

“I will make him an help meet for him.” That is what a true wife always is. A help, and a meet help—not one word, but two. Not a help-mate, which is only a superior servant, not a “lady-help,” but a help meet.



The word translated “help” is the very word applied in the Psalms to God:—“The Lord is my Help.” “I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help.” “Meet” means fit, appropriate, suitable, corresponding to. In Tyndale’s old version of the Bible the phrase reads: “An aid like unto himself,” and that is really what is meant. A helper who is his own counterpart. It has been shrewdly said that the woman was not taken from man’s head lest she should be his master, nor from his foot lest she should be his slave, but from his side that she might be his equal. A wife is not a man’s shadow or subordinate, but his other self, and, to an extent which no other being on earth can be, his helper.

A helper from the Lord. “And the Lord God brought her to the man.” The Lord has sent prophets and apostles and other great spiritual teachers into the world; and so He has sent woman—sent her into our homes, nay, He has not sent, but brought her. There can be no doubt about woman’s Divine commission. She takes her place at her husband’s

side, and in the bosom of her family as an angel—messenger from God.

7. In this connection there is something very suggestive in the respective endings of the two Creation stories. A priest, or committee of priests, compiled this Book of Genesis, and wrote the later story which stands as a preface to the book. In the priest's account, the end of the works of Creation, and that to which, in his judgment, all the rest leads, was the institution of the Sabbath. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made: and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." The older story, the one before us now, ends with the making of woman. That was the final and crowning act of Creation. What the Sabbath rest, and peace, and worship are to the one story, woman and home are to the other. And there is a correspondence between the two. The Sabbath is the Lord's Day. The woman

is the Lord's special messenger. Both are intended to raise our thoughts to higher things, and cement the union between mankind and God.

It is not then a sign of weakness in a woman to be religious. It is a sign of strength. She belongs to God in a very special sense, and for her to forget Him is one of the worst forms of treason. Religion is normal to a woman, and therefore nothing is so deforming to her as irreligion. Even irreligious men notice this deformity, and are repelled by it. Thoughtless young women have sometimes tried to commend themselves to godless young men in their circle by affecting godlessness themselves. They always defeat their purpose by so doing. A woman without religion is without woman's greatest charm.

It is the religion and the religious influence which a good woman brings which make her such an unspeakable blessing. Away from the womenfolk of his household, on some foreign shore, in barracks or colonies of men, we know how hard it is to maintain one's moral

and spiritual integrity. And generally, if it were not for the restraining power of a woman's gentleness and spirituality, what a bear-garden this world would be! A true wife helps in many ways, attending to the duties of the household, and interesting herself in the pursuits of her husband. But the best of all her services is what she does to keep the fire of religion burning on the family altar, sweetening the atmosphere of home by the fragrances of Paradise, brightening it by the radiance of a countenance that daily and hourly looks into the face of God, and thus beyond her own circle, and to an extent which we little know, preserving and promoting the beauty, and gladness, and virtue of the world.

This, of course, refers to the ideal woman—the woman of the Creator's purpose. Many alas fall short of this ideal, and some seem to lose sight of it altogether. It cannot be said that every wife is the gentle counsellor and helper God intended her to be, and, as Bishop Hall has said, "there are men who



have had their heads broken by their own ribs." But there is no sadder sight on earth, none which represents a greater fall, or a more serious loss to the community, than a spoiled woman.

For their own sake, and for the sake of the men, it is of the utmost importance that women should learn to preserve always a true self-respect. By a true self-respect we do not mean so much the remembrance of what is due to them, whether of homage or service, but, rather, the recognition of their high vocation, and of what they can do to help a sinning, suffering world. If women would but set themselves, among their ever-multiplying pursuits, to cultivate assiduously what are their very highest gifts; if more of them were, in spirit, like the sisters of Bethany, or the women who stood beside the cross, and went early to the sepulchre; or like such women of our own time as Josephine Butler, or Frances Ridley Havergal, or Catherine Booth, or Florence Nightingale, and a host of others, who though not known perhaps

beyond their own individual circle, have, by their goodness and spirituality, brought into that circle the very light of heaven—if women generally could be brought to recognize in this way their own spiritual significance, and the greatness of their opportunities of spiritual service, mankind would receive such an uplift as it has never known before.

It is equally important that men should cultivate respect for woman, for their own sake as well as hers. A woman who preserves her own self-respect will generally command the respect of others. But apart from this, there are obligations to which men are in honour bound, and from which nothing can release them. According to the importance of what is best in woman is man's responsibility for doing all he can to defend, and preserve, and foster it. In the old Jewish temple it was sacrilege to lay rude hands upon the ark of God, and it is sacrilege of the very same kind to insult a woman, or to do anything, or to say anything, that might sully the brightness and purity of her nature.

The true appreciation of womanhood means much more than mere liking. It means reverence. We may recognize a value in a thing, and yet be far from knowing its true value. The Indians of Peru, in the olden time, used to keep a little heap of diamonds, just to use as counters in their games. A man may be well aware of the convenience of having women in his household—mother, sisters, wife—and may even give them a warm place in his affections, without having any adequate conception of the treasure he has in them.

A man's respect for women will greatly depend upon the kind of women with whom he associates in his leisure hours. When we are at liberty to choose, it is imperative that the women who are our friends should be good women. There is a saying, once attributed to Solomon, to the effect that among a thousand women he had not found one good one. A lady, in whose presence this was quoted, at once replied—"That shows what sort of company he kept." The retort was

just. He who sees nothing of noble buildings but their ruins, can have no idea of the possibilities of architecture.

8. "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her to the man." That represents the normal state of things as the Creator planned it: but the complicated artificial arrangements of our, as yet imperfect, civilization often defeat the Divine intention, and the auspicious meeting does not take place. There are Eves who have not yet found their Adam, and Adams who have not yet found their Eve. Some of the choicest and best of women are, by what seems like accident, unmated. "It so happened," said an aged spinster, "that those who did love me I could not love, and those whom I could love did not love me." Having too high a conception of the sacredness of this relationship to think of giving her hand where she could not give her heart, the happiness of wifedom and motherhood was denied her. But such virginity is sacred, based as it is upon loyalty to honour and



principle and to the true spirit and meaning of matrimony. And it has its compensations. In some of the most important spheres such women are rendering priceless service to mankind. The sacrifice they have made qualifies them for this service, and He who laid down His life to save us does not forget them. Whatever privileges and preferments are denied them here, they will surely have seats of honour at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Many young men there are who would be glad to marry if they had the chance, but there are at present insuperable difficulties in the way. Their income is insufficient, or they have mother or sisters dependent upon them, and so, much against their inclination, they are compelled to wait. Well, Adam was kept waiting for a time, that he might be made aware of his need of such companionship. It was not fitting that a gift so precious should be intrusted to his care until he had learned to value it. So God keeps young men waiting now, and happy is he who

accepts the discipline, resists temptation with iron will, and waits in innocence and purity for the beautiful Eve God is going to bring to him by and by.

# **FORBIDDEN FRUIT**

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat :

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

GENESIS ii. 16-17.



## V

### FORBIDDEN FRUIT

THESE words introduce us to an altogether new method of procedure on the part of the Creator. We have seen the primeval chaos reduced to order and man raised from the dust. But so far in this story we have seen nothing quite so astonishing as that which is brought before us now. When God wanted the light to appear, or the mountains to stand out upon the face of the earth, or the ocean to roll into its bed, or the worlds to take their places in the sky, He spake and it was done. When He wanted to make the living creatures of the earth and man He simply made them. But now it appears as if the Divine movements had received a check. The course hitherto pursued

is no longer practicable, and God adopts another. Instead of a creative word He issues a command, and a command that evidently can be disobeyed, for the threat follows: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

What the author of this story wishes first of all to impress upon our minds, by attributing this changed mode of action to the Almighty, is the fact of human freedom. In his view the Creator is dealing now, not with dead matter, nor with living creatures who are passive in His hands, but with personalities, upon whom He has, by, perhaps, the greatest act of His creative power, conferred the right to please themselves what they shall do.

Millenniums of brooding investigation have not discredited this ancient thinker. No later conception on this subject has superseded his. In the region of thought and imagination we may deny it, but for practical purposes we are bound to admit it as the only working principle of life. We feel that we are free

ourselves, and we treat one another as free. This assumption is the basis of all government in the family, in society, in the Church, and in the State. What are our magistrates, and judges, and legislators doing from day to day but administering or devising measures by which the free people of the world may be induced to make a right use of their freedom?

Man was created in the likeness of God. Here we see one element of that likeness. Within a limited area we have something of God's independence. He has seen fit, in His wisdom, to make us in this way. He has renounced a certain measure of control that He might confer it upon us. Of course we cannot get right away from God: we have freedom only within the length of our tether. But, to that extent, ours is a very real freedom. God's power is ever with us; in Him we live and move and have our being; but it is not so much a compulsory as a helping power. God gives us the conception of goodness, and the summons to seek it, but

the definite act of will by which we respond to that summons is our own.

Having once endowed man with this freedom, it cannot be recalled. "The gifts of God are without repentance." He never makes mistakes. And so it is open to man, according to his own self-determination, to advance or to recede, to develop or to degenerate. He may set himself to be good and useful, or he may decide to do that which means heartbreak to those who love him, ruin to himself, and serious damage to society. God not only warns, He assists, but only as far as this may be done without interfering with the liberty He has conferred, for duty is never a matter of constraint, but of voluntary obedience. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it." Far removed as this prohibition is from the mockery of an impossible requirement, it does imply that the man has it in his power to do what is forbidden.

But why was the tree permitted to be there? We do not suppose that the circum-



stances of the first moral struggle of mankind were actually as they are here described, or that there was really any tree in the case. The language is obviously figurative, and in this story the writer's imagination has evidently supplied him with the material, thus to set forth, in a form easily understood, and easily remembered, his own deep convictions with regard to some of the fundamental facts of man's moral history. In its nature, what we have here is a parable, like one of our Lord's parables in the Gospels, and, in the case of both, what is essential is the teaching and not the form.

The tree then must be regarded as a symbol of something or other that was forbidden, and the question we have asked will take this form. Whatever the tempting object may have been, why was it there at all? One explanation is, that it was put there for the express purpose of proving man's obedience; and we are told that just as a gardener might select any one tree in his orchard for some special reservation, so

God arbitrarily fixed upon this tree, or whatever the tree stands for, as the instrument of man's temptation. We have heard of householders who do not scruple to leave money about the house to test the honesty of their servants, but it savours surely of blasphemy to attribute conduct such as this to God. To set snares for people is fiendish, and not Divine. God never tempts any man. The few passages of Scripture which seem to suggest that He does, permit of another and altogether worthier interpretation. If man was forbidden to eat of the fruit of this tree, it was because, for some reason or other, to do so was injurious. The prohibition had the same meaning and intention as a red light on the railway, or a buoy on a sunken rock, or a notice to a cyclist that the hill he is approaching is dangerous, or a mother's warning to her child not to play with fire. It was not to tempt man, but to warn him, and for his good, that God said, "Thou shalt not eat of it."

But if the thing was harmful, why was it

allowed to be there? We always have a guard round the nursery fire, and wherever little children are about, dangerous things are, as far as possible, put out of their reach. Ought not the childhood of mankind to have been treated with similar consideration? There is reason to believe that it was, that everything which in the nature of things could be done for man's security was done, and that, whatever the forbidden tree symbolizes, it would not have been there if it could have been kept away.

The tree of this story is a figurative representation of those limitations and restrictions which belong of necessity to finite things and finite beings. The strongest cable can bear only a certain amount of strain; under a greater strain it parts. Our big ocean liners have their registered tonnage. The load-line is the sign of prohibition, and the profit of any freight which sinks the hull below that line is of the nature of forbidden fruit. To seek it means to imperil the safety of the ship. A boiler is made to sustain, say,

a hundred pounds per inch of pressure. The steam gauge tells the engineer when that limit is being approached, and he knows well that, whatever advantage, in the way of extra speed or production, an excess of steam may promise, is forbidden fruit, which is only to be obtained at the risk of an explosion.

So with man, like everything else living or not living, he has his inevitable limitations. There is in each department of his life a line which he must not pass. All beyond that line is forbidden fruit.

Inasmuch as we are free and less than infinite we are temptable. A man who owned all the money in the world obviously could not steal any. But if only one pound were put into the hands of another, the possibility of temptation to get unlawful possession of it would at once arise. In such a world as this we cannot imagine a state of things in which, for free and finite creatures, there is not something they must not do. This is not then one of those statements from antiquity which, having no means of verify-



ing or disproving, we must receive on trust. Like the sunrise and the sunset, like the succession of the seasons, like birth and death, what is referred to here is a fact of our own time. It is as much a modern story as an ancient one. We have its counterpart in our experience. To understand the story and to verify it we have only to look into our own heart and life. It belongs to our own personal history. This story of the forbidden fruit is a poetical account of something which happens to us all.

There is a forbidden tree in everybody's garden, and we are all familiar with it. We cannot remember when we saw it first. We were so young. As little children we would have liked to be able to fly like birds, and run like deer, and move great loads as we saw horses do. But attempting to do these things we were at once brought up by the inexorable "Thou shalt not." The command in this case was absolute. We could not cross the limit if we would. But soon we became aware of other limitations. There

were things which we wanted to do, and could, but which we knew we must not. Some of these were prohibited by physical considerations. We might want to stay under water like a fish, or put our hands into the fire, or eat poison. We had the power to do these things, but the dread of injury and death said, "Thou shalt not." But at length we learned that our activities must be confined, not only to what is pleasant and physically harmless and within our power, but most imperatively to what is right. There were things both possible and desirable, and from which there were no physical considerations to deter us, which yet we knew we must not do, for pleasant as they might be, and even advantageous to our lower nature, a voice said: "Thou shalt not."

What was that voice? It must refer to an experience not of the individual only, but of the race, and it is here regarded as the basis of human responsibility. It would seem that man alone of all the creatures of the earth hears that voice, and the power to hear it

is one of the marks and causes of his supremacy. In the individual, as in the race, it is only faintly and indistinctly heard at first, and the power of hearing it may be cultivated, arrested, or suppressed. We have examples of all three conditions in the world to-day. It is indeed doubtful whether the suppression of the power of hearing it can ever be absolute, but there are persons who maintain that in their own case it is. Arrested forms are seen in the beliefs and superstitions of aboriginal races. Natives of the South Sea Islands will point to a tree, or some other object, and say it is *taboo*. What the word means exactly it is impossible to say, but it is believed that whoever tampers with an object of which this may be said, will thereby incur some great misfortune. A tree that is *taboo* is a forbidden tree.

In this product of arrested moral discernment we see what may have been the earliest form of the story before us now. In both we have the endeavour to express the antagonism between desire and duty, as it

presented itself to the dawning intelligence of mankind. The conception, crude as it may be, is not a groundless fancy, but the voicing of an innate conviction—an intuition of the soul—and so, however imperfectly in this case the cosmic whisper may have been understood, it represents a primitive stage of revelation. The results of the cultivation of this spiritual faculty are seen in the Bible, in all that is true and of abiding worth in other religions, and in the ideals which are the most precious of man's possessions.

It is with the beginnings of this experience we have now to do—the voice, as it first made itself audible to the human heart. In his pre-natal life a man's body passes successively through various earlier stages of human evolution. And so, after birth, does his spirit. Living at first by instinct, by and by self-consciousness is reached, and a child begins to act with a purpose and exercise his will. Before long he is aware of something within him which gives a feeling of guilt and shame when he does some things which are neither



painful nor physically injurious; and gradually he grows into the recognition of an authority outside and above himself and his circle, and the visible world, and of the existence of an evil to be avoided and a good to be secured far greater than any his physical senses can perceive. So conscience is born in each of us, and it is the birth of conscience in the founder of our race that is referred to here. A voice said: "Thou shalt not."

It is in the higher developments of the power of interpreting it that we see most clearly what that voice is, and what is its significance. Conscience is not the speaker, nor is it the voice: it is rather the ear which hears it. One may hear without knowing who it is one hears, and conscience may be active in a child before it is able to recognize who speaks through it. Its injunctions are at first identified with the will, and pleasure, and commands of parents and teachers. But sooner or later comes the knowledge that, apart from these, there is a distinction between right and wrong; and that the voice

which makes us aware of this distinction is final, one against which there is no appeal.

Conscience has the highest authority behind it. If there is a Divine voice in this world—a voice that represents the law of our being and of our destiny—it is that voice referred to here, the voice which began to speak to us in childhood, as it began in the earliest days of its history to speak to mankind. Conscience listened, and, in what it heard, “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

But seeing that the risk was great, and the consequences of disobedience so serious, why was man endowed with liberty? Why did not God so make us that we must turn to righteousness as certainly as a magnetized needle turns to the pole? Why did He not compel us to be good? Many have asked that question, but no one appears to relish

that kind of treatment in ordinary life. The Government has to keep some people out of mischief by locking them up in gaol. Obviously, if everybody were locked up in gaol, there would be no breaches of the law. But apart from the difficulty about the gaolers, and serious as is the law-breaking of our time, no one would be mad enough to suggest that universal obedience to the law should be secured by such an expedient as that. We hear men sing in chorus, and, generally, most vociferously, "Britons never shall be slaves." We have been taught to set such a high value upon liberty that, if necessary, some of us would be prepared to die in its defence. If then it is so precious—and our respect for it does honour to our human nature—why, because we have abused it, should we question God's wisdom in conferring it? "‘How would it now look to you,’ said King Alfred, ‘if there were any powerful King, and he had no freemen in his kingdom, but that all were slaves?’ ‘Then,’ said I, ‘it would not be thought by me either right or reasonable if

men, in such a servile condition only, could attend upon him.' 'Then,' quoth he, 'it would be more unnatural if God in all His kingdom had no free creatures. Therefore He gave to men the great gift of freedom. Hence they could do evil as well as good, whichever they would.'"

But liberty is not only precious in itself, it is still more precious in its fruits. It is an indispensable pre-requisite of character. An honest man is not one who, never having had a chance of stealing, has never stolen anything, but one who has had the chance and did not. And so with our moral nature as a whole. There must be these two sides to it. To be good we must be free; the one is involved in the other. Conscience cannot be associated with coercion. Even God cannot compel man to be good. The very idea of such a thing involves a contradiction in terms. There is no moral value whatsoever in doing what we cannot help doing, nor in letting things alone which are not within our reach. It is simply meaningless to speak



of a moral being that is not free. Worlds may be called into existence by a word, but not character. That must grow, and it can only grow in an atmosphere of liberty. God may help men to be good, and He does do it to the utmost; but even He must leave them to decide whether they will be good or not, for the goodness of an action vanishes when it is not done by deliberate choice.

There are many enterprises fraught with more or less danger which offer at the same time such advantages that the very shrewdest judges say, "It is worth the risk." If ever there was anything concerning which that might be said with confidence, it was the creation of free moral creatures like ourselves. The only alternative was to have left man in the dust, or at one of those inferior stages of animal life from which he has ascended, a mere puppet in the hands of the Almighty. In their serious moments no self-respecting man or woman could think with approval of such an alternative as that. The fact that we are able to judge between

right and wrong, and that we have liberty to give effect to such judgments, or set them aside, makes us immeasurably superior to all other living creatures on the earth. It exposes us to awful losses, but it offers on the other hand such immeasurable gains, that, in the all-wise judgment of Him who made us, it was worth the risk.

Our condition now is one of probation, and, generally, it is the risk connected with such a condition that we think of most; but what probation should first of all suggest to us is opportunity. The tree does represent danger, and that danger is indicated here, but it represents also our chances of higher development. A state of things that has made sin possible has made virtue possible too. We were sent into this world, not so much to avoid disaster as to achieve a great success: not just to ward off evil but to gain possession of the good. Every prohibition of this kind means, not only a command to turn away, and look away, from the things prohibited, but to turn and look to some-

thing better—better than we have ever known before; and so it is really a call to a new promotion.

The great business of our life is to bring the animal part of us into subjection to the spiritual part, to tame the savage in us, to make our whole nature moral; and morality means the formation of a habit by which our life, hitherto led, perhaps, by appetite and self-gratification, shall be made obedient to the law of that higher state of being to which we are called to rise.

It is said that the human body has reached the limit of its development, and certainly the ancient Greeks, to judge by their statues, could show as goodly specimens of men and women as are to be found in our own day. Intellectually, also, the Greeks were at least our equals; but we have advanced greatly upon Greek conceptions of virtue, and upon Greek practice of it. In this direction there is still room for indefinite advance, but there can be no advance without the discipline of the forbidden fruit. The central principle of

true manliness or womanliness is self-control. We have to make our nature tractable, to get our will on to the side of the Divine voice that speaks within us, and we can only do this by making it our habit always to obey. This self-mastery cannot be won without a struggle, and a desperate struggle; but it is a struggle in which the best of our forefathers have been engaged, and to their victories we owe much of what is best in humanity to-day. Restriction is inevitable. To violate it is to die; but instead of thinking about that, let us think rather of what we have to gain by faithfulness. It is not pleasant to be told that we must not do what we want to do, or that something we have been accustomed to do we must do no longer; but it is by submission to such restraint and by this alone that we are perfected.

This tree of the story, then, represents our human limitation, with the prohibitions it involves. There are things we must not do. We are free to disregard the prohibition if we choose; but the voice of God, speaking



through our conscience, reminds us of the responsibility of our highly endowed human nature. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it."

The first sense of moral restriction must have come to men in connection with some definite act or thing, and it was a true poetic instinct which led to the choice of such an object as a tree as the central figure of this story. Nothing could serve better to give a clear and comprehensive representation of those moral struggles with which we are all familiar in our daily life. Hunger and love, it has been said, are the root elements of human nature, and the foundation of its morals. Impulse and emotion give us the material of virtue. This material may be utilized, or misused and thrown away.

"Of the fruit of the tree thou shalt not eat of it." Fruit was man's normal food at that time, for he was not only a vegetarian, but a fruitarian. Yet here is fruit forbidden, and this reminds us that there are important moral restrictions with regard to what we

eat and drink. Even when sitting down at our own table we must be on our guard. We have heard men contend that God would never create a tree whose fruit man was not allowed to eat. Is it likely, they ask, that God would bring into existence what we can eat and drink, and then prohibit it? As a matter of fact, this is just what God has done. There are forbidden fruits well known to us all. We may eat the apple or the orange, but the first meal we make of the fruit of the deadly nightshade will be our last. A tree may have important uses apart from man. There are inferior animals to be considered, and in some cases fruits which are serviceable to these are most pernicious to human beings. The fruit of the gelsemium will kill a man, yet pigs thrive on it. It does not follow that because God has made a thing He has made it for us, or, if He has, that He has made it for us to eat or drink. A tree may be serviceable to men in other ways: its timber may enter into the structure of our houses; it may be an

object of beauty in the garden. We may climb it, as Zacchæus did the sycamore, to enlarge our range of vision. Things are useful in various ways, and some may be very useful, and yet of no use as food. We have seen a poor, helpless drunkard—one of the saddest of all spectacles—hold up with his trembling hand a glass of liquor to the light and say, “One of God’s good creatures,” as if, that being admitted, there was nothing further to be said. But this tree in the midst of the garden was one of God’s good creatures, and was it not both pleasant to the sight and good for food? Some good Christian people take intoxicants without loss of self-respect or self-control. They can be satisfied with the small daily quota. But there are multitudes to whom this is quite impossible. The taste of alcohol develops a new and abnormal appetite which becomes an insatiable craving. To such this is the forbidden fruit, and to touch it will be their ruin, as it has been the ruin of many a good man before. There are other ways in which we

are required to put a restraint upon our appetite—other forms of forbidden fruit. To have our tables spread with luxuries for which we cannot pay, without leaving other and more important needs unsatisfied; or with dainties which are injurious to our health; or with ordinary food which we ought to share with others—is to eat forbidden fruit, and those who do so must pay the inevitable penalty. The custom of asking God's blessing on our meals is often treated lightly, or neglected, but there are few occasions on which we need more to have God at our right hand.

A tree growing in the midst of the garden, and Adam was a gardener. Then the forbidden tree, the occasion of sin, may be found in our daily toil, and there we do find it every day. Men may sin, and do sin, in the most sacred places, even in the House of God; but in the routine of our daily life, in the office, in the shop, in the factory, in the school, in the kitchen among the pots and pans, there it is that sin awaits us, and, by



the way in which we deal with evil as it presents itself to us in the ordinary ways of life, we stand or fall.

A tree—a forbidden *tree*. Then we may sin apart from our fellow-men. Some sins depend on the presence of others—we are in no danger of falling into these when we are alone. There is no need to tell us then, not to steal, or bear false witness, or wound, or kill. When by ourselves such sins are impossible. But these are not the only sins. Some are disposed to ignore all other forms of wrong-doing, and to say that it does not matter what we do so long as no one is any the worse for it. So we hear of people basing a claim to innocence upon the assumption that they have never done anyone any harm. It would be well if all could say that. But one might say that, and say it sincerely, and yet fall far short of his duty. There is the law of the land, and the law of society, and the law which regulates our relationships to one another in our homes—all these are very important; but there is also the law of man's

own nature, and personality, the law of the universe, the law of God. Alone on a desert island, there is still before us the forbidden fruit. It is by faithfulness with our own heart in secret that we win life's greatest victories, and it is by unfaithfulness there, where no eye sees us, that we contract that enfeeblement of will which brings about our overthrow. As a warning against these sins of heart and mind—the irreverence, the unbelief, the dark plotting, the bitterness of feeling, the black pessimism which threaten our hours of solitude—a silent tree is represented as furnishing the occasion of sin.

But it was not only a tree but “a tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The mention of such a tree carries us back to the time when trees were worshipped, and when some of them were supposed to be the seat of oracles, at which things unlawful to be known might be divulged. Its designation gives it a position of exceptional importance among such oracular trees, for “the knowledge of good and evil” must mean all know-

ledge, the two extremes being used in Semitic fashion, to represent the whole. The name reminds us also of ancient prejudice against knowledge, especially knowledge of the secrets of Nature, which, it was then believed, were only to be obtained by methods which were profane and blasphemous. The story owes its position in this Book, not to such accidents as the time and place of its conception, but to its tested moral and spiritual truth, and it is this with which we are now concerned. Being called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to us it stands for the unknown object or circumstance, in connection with which man first became aware of the moral quality of his actions. The meaning of the ethical *ought*, and *ought not*, is supposed to have first dawned upon his mind as he looked at this tree, or whatever the tree represents. It is not suggested that man will obtain the knowledge of the distinction between good and evil by eating of the forbidden fruit, for the statement that he heard and understood the prohibition assumes that he had that

knowledge already. The tree was the object, in man's dealings with which, conscience made its earliest interposition, and so, as man's moral instructor, it was to him the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The appellation is further justified by the fact that, as in all such cases, knowledge is the precursor of experience. The tree offered to the man that of which it told him. It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it presented these two alternatives. The man might choose which he would have. By disobedience the tree would bring to him the experience of evil, by obedience it would bring to him the experience of good.

The principle thus illustrated is of the widest application. There is hardly any evil thing in the world—pain, sickness, poverty, persecution—which may not be made a blessing, and there is hardly any good thing in the world which may not be made a curse. Water is one of the most beautiful objects in Nature, and it is of immense utility, but we may be drowned in it. Fire is an indispens-



able element of our civilization, but there are few things that can be more destructive. Even the Gospel of our salvation may be the savour of death unto death. Every prohibition holds out two hands to us—good in the one, and evil in the other. He who spurns the forbidden thing receives the good, and he who embraces it receives the evil.

There was a tree of knowledge of good and evil for the first man, and there is something which corresponds with it for everyone. For Esau it was a mess of pottage ; for Ahab it was Naboth's vineyard ; for Judas it was thirty pieces of silver. What is the forbidden tree for us ? and where is it ? We have not to go far to seek it. It confronts us in every avenue of life. To the little child, it is the sugar in the cupboard, which its mother has told it not to touch. To the underpaid clerk, it is the money in his master's till. To the undisciplined young man, it is the lewd woman in the street. To the undisciplined young woman, it is the fast young man. To some it is the red wine, to

others the greed of gain, or the cynicism of unbelief, or the pride of unbalanced knowledge—the books, the debates, the arguments, which lead them farther and farther from purity, and truth, and love.

It is hard, desperately hard, sometimes, to resist the alluring, fascinating things, that are forbidden. We have often felt as if we must at length give way. But from beside this tree, the same authoritative voice which issued the prohibition says: "Be faithful! Obey your conscience! Play the man! Be true to your ideal! Respect your own integrity! Honour God!" So doing, the things which strain, and worry, and exhaust us, will prove to be the means of our development; and, resisting, it may be unto blood, striving against sin, we shall "rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things."

# THE SERPENT

“ Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ?

“ And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden :

“ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

“ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die :

“ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

GENESIS iii. 1-5.



## VI

### THE SERPENT

IN any serious conflict our chances of victory will be greatly increased by knowing something of the strength and nature and tactics of our opponent, and in the greatest fight of life—the fight referred to here—none of us can afford to be without such knowledge.

The passage before us now has much to tell us upon this subject. We have seen that sin is made possible by these two facts : first, that, like all beings less than infinite, we have our limitations, our nature being bounded in every direction by a line—represented here by the forbidden fruit—a line which cannot be crossed without damage or destruction ; and secondly, the fact that we

are free: that we can, if we will, defy the law of our nature, by disregarding our limitations, and going over the border which marks off the area of our existence, or of our well-being.

The strange thing is that we should want to do so. Apart from observation of actual life, we might expect that to know the right thing would be to do it, that to hear the voice of Him who made us, saying, however softly, to our heart, "Thou shalt not," would mean turning away instantly from that which is forbidden. A train, whose safety depends upon its keeping to the metals, does not always do so, in spite of all our care, and dreadful disaster is the result. But a train is a lifeless thing. If it were vital, as we are, if it were aware of the conditions, and had power to do as it pleased, why, surely, then, we should never hear of such a thing as a train being off the line. But in the human sphere this is just what we do hear of every day. It is as true now as in the days of the prophet, that, instead of following

the appointed course of our development, we have turned every one to his own way.

There must be something to account for this. What is it? At the back of sin we always put temptation. It is taken for granted in every case. Who led that young man astray? Who betrayed that young woman? We try in this way to explain and excuse our own misdoings. "I was tempted." Then who tempted you? This is the question dealt with here, and it is interesting to note how this old-world writer answered it, and what his answers were.

I. Who or what then was man's first tempter?

1. The story says it was a serpent, and there is no reason to doubt that the author simply meant what he said. Among primitive races people did not hesitate to attribute human faculties to inferior animals. Serpents, especially, were regarded with superstitious reverence, and credited with magic powers. The ancient Egyptians always had a live serpent in their temples, and the image of a

serpent was usually carved on their temple door. In such an age, a story of this kind would meet with ready acceptance, and no one would think it at all incredible that a serpent should be so well acquainted with the properties of trees, and be able to talk to the woman.

2. But, however it may have been with the author of the story and with the generation that first heard it, it is not likely that it was taken quite so literally by those who compiled this Book of Genesis, and wrote the later account of the Creation. For the sake of its high moral teaching they preserved it, but in the serpent they probably saw little more than the sobriquet of a mysterious and unknown enemy. In the judgment of these early religious philosophers, sin must have come into the world by the agency of some one who was neither God nor man, and, having no idea who that some one was, the old familiar figure of a serpent would do as well as any to represent him.

3. As a step back towards a more literal



interpretation, the later Jewish writers, in the light of more advanced theories, taught that the tempter was really a serpent, but a "possessed" serpent—a serpent possessed with a devil. The Arabs say of the deadly little horned snakes of the desert that each one is an incarnate demon, and the Rabbis at Jerusalem, borrowing, most likely, from the folk-lore of the time, made a similar assertion of the serpent that tempted Eve. This teaching, with which Milton has made us familiar in his "Paradise Lost," has for several centuries been generally received. "Eve was tempted," it is said, "by Satan in the disguise of a serpent."

To some, this later view is the more plausible and attractive, because it permits us to contrive such a close correspondence between the position of our first parents and that of our Lord when He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, for Mark tells us that Jesus was among the wild beasts, and it has been suggested that it was in the form of one of these that Satan appeared.

The existence of evil spirits seems, in the New Testament, and in the later part of the Old Testament, to be assumed, and science can have nothing to say against it. We are not likely to be the only self-conscious created beings in the universe, and if, in the unseen, there are other finite spiritual personalities, it is possible that sin is not unknown amongst them. Some men and women have behaved like fiends incarnate, and, for ought we know, they may continue their evil doings after they leave this world. But whether any of these can be the direct agents of temptation is open to serious question. Paul said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." These are awful words, and living in quiet times like ours, it is natural enough to regard them as descriptive of antagonisms from another world, but with an adequate conception of the sort of antagonisms from this world, with which the Apostle and the Christians of his

day had to contend, we shall need no other explanation.

However this may be, the tempter of this story cannot be identified with any supernatural enemy. The earlier parts of the Old Testament know nothing whatever of Satan, or evil spirits. The existence of such had not yet been suggested. The devil, as we speak of him to-day, was a conception of a much later age. The earliest known suggestion that Satan had anything to do with the temptation is in one of the Apocryphal Books—the Wisdom of Solomon—which was not written until a hundred years after the Book of Genesis was completed, and probably several hundreds of years after the original appearance of this story. Its author meant, as we have seen, an actual serpent, and, if in this he is not to be taken literally, he was probably much nearer the literal truth than we are when we say that man's first tempter was the devil.

4. If not a serpent, nor yet the devil, what was the tempter? Belonging to the animal

creation, a serpent is suggestive of something more on a level with mankind than an evil spirit would be, and if we would find the being indicated we must look not up, nor down, but around. Was it then a member of our race? If so, who was it? Many people fall through the effects of evil companionship. Adam's tempter is said to have been his wife, and again and again a tempting serpent has been found in some intimate associate. But such was not the tempter here, for in the case supposed there was only one other human being in existence, and he was not present at the time. As far as human society was concerned, the tempted one was absolutely alone.

5. According to one possible derivation of the name, Eve means serpent, and it is suggested that the woman's tempter in this case was just herself. In the light of New Testament teaching, and of the best-supported views of human nature, we have in this suggestion the real clue to the serpent of this story. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve the serpent, but



both had the real tempter in their own personal selves.

6. This tempting of the individual by himself may take place in various ways.

The lower part of our nature may tempt the higher. Even in our body there is a constant struggle between the law of our life and the law of the material of which our body is composed. For one of the properties of matter is that of taking the temperature of the medium in which it is placed, and it retains this property when built up into the living human frame, one of whose essential requirements is, that, whether in winter or summer, whether in the tropics or at the poles, it shall be kept always at the uniform temperature of about ninety-eight and a half degrees. "Thou shalt not depart from the normal blood-heat of the body!" That is the law of healthy human life. But, in accordance with its nature, the material of the body is constantly pressing us to violate that law, and the conflict which ensues, and which manifests itself from time to time in the

sensation of being uncomfortably hot or cold, continues without a break from birth to death.

But if the material of which it is made tempts the living body, much more seriously does the living body tempt the soul. For ours is a dual nature. We have a physical life which has come to us by evolution from below, and a spiritual life which has been communicated to us from above. There is something of the angel in us, and there is also something of the beast, yes, even of the reptile too. What is more natural and more common than for the appetite of the one to set itself against the aspiration of the other? That which, by the law of our higher nature, we know we ought not to do, is often that which, by the law of our lower nature, we most want to do. What is spiritual in us demands respect for the prohibition, and what is animal in us tempts us to disregard it.

This is the antinomy which Paul refers to, in what may be regarded as his version of the Serpent Story, in the Epistles to the Romans

and the Galatians. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

To the same purport are the words of the Epistle of James, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

This teaching is not a matter of old tradition, but of everyday experience. At every call of duty the animal part of us has much to say against it. We often begin the day with an altercation of this kind. The bell rings in the morning, or there is a knock at our bedroom door, reminding us that it is time to rise, but something says, "Lie a little longer. You can have ten minutes more." We say "the bed pulls," but it is not the bed, it is the old serpent of our own self-indulgent nature. This may seem a little thing, hardly worth mentioning, but it is the

preliminary skirmish, the first random shot of an opening battle in which truth, and honour, and our very salvation, may be at stake before the day is over. The worst enemy of our better self is our own lower self.

Our past also may be the tempter of the present. If men were stationary beings, which had reached the limit of their development, such temptation would be unknown. But our evolution is not yet complete. We are ever moving, and ought to be ever moving upward. But for this ascent to be maintained there are difficulties to be overcome. We naturally hold on to where we are, and every move upward means a wrench. Even Christian people seem sometimes to shrink as much from being promoted to a higher state of grace, as the majority of people do from being taken to heaven. This is part of what is meant by the temptation we are considering now.

That man, at the beginning, was thus tempted, whatever, in any particular case, may have been the nature of the temptation, there can



be no doubt. He was an animal before he was a man, flesh before he was spirit. As the ape-nature grew into human nature a serious conflict was bound to arise between the old habits and the claims of the new life—between animal passions, intensified by ages of development, and the new spiritual convictions. The express rushes along a straight portion of the track mile after mile, but the effect of having done so is to create a difficulty when the curve is reached, for the inertia of the moving mass, with the momentum it has acquired, forces it straight on. There is a ravine and an unbridged river on ahead, and the law of the safety of the train is, “Thou shalt not go further in that direction.” The rails are there to assist it to obey. But the masterful engine with its retinue of cars resists the effort to deflect it, and the attrition of the metals at the curve shows how hardly that resistance has been overcome.

So with the course of human life. What inertia is to matter, that is habit to a man. The tendency in Adam, now that the human

stage was reached, was to go on as before ; still to do whatever he wanted to do, and eat whatever he desired ; to continue to act in a higher state of being as he had done in a lower. It is so with us all. No sooner does a desire, however feeble, for higher spiritual good arise, than the customs and usages of earlier periods of life begin to assert themselves against it. So it is that a man's own history becomes a tempting serpent to him.

But the suggestion of wrong doing cannot always be referred to the animal nature. Every surrender to the lower part of us tends to bring everything else into subjection to it, and one faculty after another adopting the rôle of the tempter, at length the whole being inclines to evil.

Even at the very beginning, as is set forth in this story, the lower nature may, in other than direct ways, oppose what is good in us.

The higher nature may lend itself to the lower, giving intellectual and other assistance in securing the unlawful gratification of the

senses, but it may also make use of the motives and methods of the lower nature for its own purposes, and so it happens that men who are in no danger of being carried away by sensual allurements, often fall a prey to the same tempter appearing in another form.

Liberty, with the consciousness and appreciation of it, is one of the greatest endowments of humanity. But by taking the lower nature into its counsels liberty may become licence, and to such an extent, in some cases, that authority of all kinds is indiscriminately spurned, and a thing becomes all the more desirable because it is prohibited. It is this, more than the thought of booty, which makes poaching and smuggling for some men so attractive; and it is this which, in the intellectual sphere, often betrays persons of alert mind and honest purpose into what is called "free-thinking"—a mode of thinking which, in its literal meaning, is in every way to be commended, but which, in practice, has come to mean little more than

preferring the irresponsible statements of tyros and charlatans to the teachings of recognised authorities. Most of us know something of this form of temptation. At one time or other in our life we have felt the impact on our will of an impulse to break bounds, and trespass into close preserves, and pry into unlawful secrets, and get possession of forbidden things. It was the serpent seeking to twist itself into our desire—altogether praiseworthy—to overcome our limitations, and reach out after a richer and fuller life. It is some such action of the lower nature upon the higher which is depicted for us here.

The noblest of human aspirations and activities may be degraded, by association with the selfish aims, and inconsiderate methods of the lower nature. Men may seek the best by the worst of means, and from the worst of motives. We commonly call this Jesuitry, but it is by no means limited to any particular Order or any particular Church. In the committees of ultra - Protestant communions straightforward business men have sometimes



been shocked by the manifestation of a spirit, and the advocacy of a policy, and the devising of expedients, for which no one could even pretend to offer any other justification than the good which might thus be secured. This was one of the temptations which Jesus met and mastered in the wilderness, His compassion for mankind giving an opening to the inferior part of the nature He had assumed to suggest, that, for such an object, even principle might be surrendered, and that it might be well to skip or slur over the intermediate stages of His redemptive ministry, so that the great end He had in view might the sooner be attained. In this story of the serpent we see the lower man offering to assist the higher man in the pursuit of knowledge, and conveying the intimation, that if thereby he can be made more like God, he may even venture to disobey Him.

Temptation may come to us from outside; from evil companions, and, perhaps, also from evil spirits, but the tempter we all have most to fear is the one we carry about with us in our

own animal nature. "The worst of all my foes, I find the enemy within."

That inward foe is the serpent-tempter of this story.

II. So much for his personality. What has the story to teach us about the character, and strength, and tactics of the tempter? We know much more than this old-world writer did, both of human nature, and serpent nature. But with all our knowledge we cannot improve upon his description. In this respect he thought and spoke better than he knew, and his words have a meaning for us of which he never dreamed. The picture is true to life. Subtle, insinuating, fascinating, venomous, lying along the bough green and glossy, and almost invisible among the leaves, the serpent does give us a truer, and more vivid representation than we could find amongst all the other creatures of the earth of the sort of enemy with which, in our common everyday temptations, we have to deal.

Anyone who has lived in serpent-ridden countries will be familiar with these points of correspondence.

1. There is no living creature on the earth of the same dimensions that is so inconspicuous, and, to all appearance, so unimportant as a serpent. A lion, a tiger, a bear do give us in their very looks, some idea of what they are, but a serpent even when elevated in a tree, clings so closely to the branches, it is not easy to distinguish it, and usually it lies low upon the ground.

And it seems so innocent. It has no manifest weapons of offence. Other wild creatures have tusks or horns or claws or talons, but a serpent has only a sting, which is so concealed, that the reptile seems altogether harmless. Evil of the most dangerous kind presents itself in a similarly unimposing form. When some notorious evil comes along we are at once upon our guard, but the temptation to which most people succumb is that which comes as a serpent, making use of agents and occasions, to which we feel so superior, that we scorn the very idea of danger. In jungles where serpents abound the traveller who values his life must not only look this way and that, he must look

down, where he is treading. What had a man like Peter to fear from the banter of a thoughtless servant maid? Had he not an hour ago stood sword in hand confronting a hundred Roman soldiers? Yes; he could defy the soldiers, but there was a weak spot in his nature of which he was not aware, and the teasing of a maid-servant led to the great sin of his life. History abounds with similar instances, and, in some of them, the strongest and most gifted members of the race have been involved. Men have maintained their ground against an avalanche of opposition, and yet in the end, some creeping, crawling, despicable worm, has been the means of their undoing. If we would keep our innocence unblemished, our character unstained, we must be ready not only to resist the bayonet charge, but think of the low-lying serpent, and beware.

2. Then again a serpent is so stealthy in its movements. It gives no sign of its approach. It is one of the quietest creatures upon earth. Lions roar, hyænas howl, but a serpent makes no sound. When irritated it may hiss, but you



must be quite close to the serpent to hear that, and then you will hardly be able to distinguish it from the rustle of the wind-swept leaves. Temptation is indeed a serpent. It comes upon us unawares. It has us in its power before we are conscious of its presence. We have need to keep our feelings in control in times of heated and angry discussion, and on the busy thoroughfares of life, but in times of silence and of solitude the serpent may not be far away—Beware!

3. A serpent cannot be kept out by ordinary barriers. You may have a high wall round your garden, but the serpent will get over it. You may go into the house, and shut the door, but it may be the serpent has got in before you. Retire to your inner chamber, and there, where you feel most secure, a serpent may lie coiled among the curtains. So with temptation, it is a serpent, and it finds us out wherever we may be.

4. There is something truly serpentine in the method of the temptation we are considering now, and it is a method with which we are all

familiar. Even the direct attacks of the larger kind of serpent are so conducted as not to excite alarm. To do this would defeat its purpose. There is no rush or spring. The reptile simply begins, almost caressingly, to fold you in its embrace. How well this represents the plausibility, the persuasiveness, and the seductiveness of many allurements to sin. "The serpent beguiled me." That exactly describes it,—not Eve's temptation only, but yours and mine. Slowly, cautiously, and gently, the serpent of temptation proceeds to entwine itself about its victim. Three familiar serpent coils are mentioned here, and these are enough. The one who has suffered the serpent to put these three coils about him is completely in its power.

(1) First of all a coil of doubt is thrown about a man's conception of the goodness and love of God. This is very characteristic. To accomplish it the serpent of temptation does not stick at any exaggeration however flagrant. "Hath God said that ye shall not eat of every"—any "tree in the garden?" God had said no such thing. One tree only was prohibited. But

however baseless may be the slander some of its mud will stick. If we can be persuaded to dwell upon our limitations and restrictions, we shall soon begin to exaggerate their extent and their significance, and the merest suggestion of unfairness in another's dealings with us is enough to raise suspicion. "God is not good." "He does not care for us." "His laws are arbitrary." "Why should I serve Him?" In nine cases out of ten where thoughtful men have fallen from high spirituality to pessimistic materialism this has been the manner of the beguiling.

The gliding subtilty of the serpent nature of temptation is never seen more strikingly than in this its favourite method of attack. What is suggested seems so sensible, so sagacious. But how really preposterous. That we mere motes on the infinite expanse should set ourselves to judge the infinite and the eternal. Why, the midge of a summer night is better qualified by far to explain the mechanism of a Dreadnought than are we to explain the ways of God. But, having shaken the woman's trust in Him who

made her, the serpent has got one coil securely fixed around her, and it proceeds to add another.

(2) "Ye shall not surely die." That is, it is possible to sin and yet escape the consequences. Nature can be cheated. You may have the cause without the effect. Contrary to all experience, and to all true reasoning, and even to common sense as is such a suggestion, there has hardly ever been a sin that was not committed under its influence. We would struggle against the temptation to sin, as we struggle with a murderer, trying to take our life, if we knew and kept in mind what sin means.

But the serpent keeps hissing in our ears, "Don't be afraid. Ye shall not surely die."

"But others have gone under."

"Yes: but you are going to escape."

"What! Can a man put his hand in the fire and not be burned?"

"Not generally, but I will show you how to do it. Ye shall not surely die."

And, so, we go on sinning, because the foolhardiness of our lower nature has persuaded us that, whatever we do all will be right in



the end. "Ye shall not surely die." Thus the serpent has thrown a second coil around the woman, and he will not keep her waiting long for the third.

(3) "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." That is, it will be a positive advantage to you to repudiate all higher authority, and take the management of your affairs into your own hands. To haunt scenes of dissipation is to see life. To break with the faith of your fathers, and the religion of your country, is to find a larger freedom. However it may be with nations and communities, anarchy is best for one's own nature.

"Ye shall be as gods." Refuse to acknowledge any higher authority, and, at least in matters relating to your own life and conduct, you may claim to be the supreme authority yourself. If you can bring yourself to crush your convictions, and throw off the trammels of your religious faith; to resolve to believe what you can see, and no more; to deny

your spiritual descent and destiny; to make the law of your lower nature the law of the whole man; only do this, and, in certain circles, you will be credited with superior intelligence, and will take your place among the knowing ones. "Ye shall be as gods."

So, with slow, innocent-looking undulations, the serpent gets coil after coil around its victim, until it has enfolded her completely, and then only is it manifest how fell its purpose was, for, once embraced within its coils, the bones of ox or tiger are crushed like matchwood, and resistance is in vain.

III. If such a serpent is our tempter, what does this story suggest with regard to our method of dealing with it?

There is nothing of fate or destiny in what is here described. We have that always in our own hands. What we are is related to what we have been, and what we shall be is related to what we are: but what would be the inevitable sequence of events in the material and mere animal world is, in the self-

conscious human sphere, modified by the decisions of our will, and, to a great extent, what we are morally is the result of what we voluntarily determine to be.

1. One of the first essentials for dealing successfully with our temptations is caution. The lower nature is pushful and presuming. We must keep it in its place. With regard to its persuasions against truth and righteousness the only safe course is to refuse to consider them. "Whosoever looketh" at some kinds of temptation is undone. "Therefore, if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble pluck it out."

2. Another essential is hatred. So long as the object of temptation is thought of as something we would have or do if it were permissible, we are in serious danger, and we are never safe until what is forbidden has become abhorrent to us. In the fancy of the author of this story the serpent gained advantage because primitive man had held the reptile in such high esteem; its true

position being that assigned to it in the degrading circumstances of the curse—"Thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat."

Sin is a hateful despicable thing, and so is the temptation which leads to it. In some forms of wrong-doing this repulsiveness is evident to all except the most depraved. Only the other day a well-dressed man, evidently returning from an evening party, stumbled into the midnight car. He was singing something, of which the chorus was, "Beer, glorious beer." But smeared as the man was from head to foot with mud from the road where he had been lying, it was plain to everybody what the glory of beer amounted to. "You should take a stiff glass of whiskey, it would do you good," said a fellow passenger on an ocean steamer. But the man was prematurely old, and one noticed his shaking hand and his unsteady gait, and the unmistakable brand of dissipation and degradation on his countenance, and judged of his advice accordingly.



Temptation does not always reveal its serpent character so clearly, but in whatever guise it may present itself, an instinctive shudder will generally remind you of what it is. It is natural to shrink at the unexpected appearance of a serpent. A similar effect is produced when temptation to evil begins first to insinuate itself into the mind and heart. A feeling of revulsion is excited, and if the moral sensitiveness thus indicated were preserved the serpent would never do us any harm.

3. With caution and abhorrence there must be confidence. We need not be dismayed by temptation, for its power is strictly limited by our capacity. The tempters are just ourselves, or creatures like ourselves, and the inferior part of them—the serpent or animal part.

There is no other tempter about which we need be concerned. The awfulness of sin, and of its consequences, cannot well be overestimated, but we may, and often do, overestimate the strength and resources of its

agents. A dying sailor in the East End of London was in a state of painful apprehension as to what awaited him in the other world, and a minister was trying to comfort him by the assurance of the infinite love of God. "Yes," the dying man gasped out, "I know all that, but it is not God I am afraid of, it is the other."

The mischief of that widespread superstition, which, in the case of this poor man, had supplanted the Christian faith, is seen very plainly in his words. The exaltation of the Devil has tended to divert attention from the real ground of moral anxiety to a fictitious one, and to put a limit to the rule of righteousness and love.

We may believe in the existence of evil spirits, and of hosts of them, if we will, but the conception of a great arch-fiend, bent on the ruin of mankind, with the attributes of a demi-god, able to be here and at the ends of the earth at the same time, and whose name it is almost as profane to trifle with as the name of the Most High, is an

imaginary one, and has come to us, not from the Bible, but from the dualism of Persia, from the superstitions of the Middle Ages, and from the daring imagination of our great poets—especially Dante and Milton.

God has no rival. There is no being in the universe who approaches the position of a rival. God is not only supreme, but in His exaltation He is alone.

The word Satan, and the word in the New Testament often translated Devil, mean adversary or calumniator, and a comparison of all the passages in which these words occur will show on how precarious a foundation the common notion of a Great Spirit of Evil rests. The words are certainly used personally sometimes, but only in a figurative sense, as when we speak of the American Eagle, or the British Lion, or the Angel of Peace, or the God of War. The author of the Book of the Revelation, borrowing from this story, refers to one of the prevalent, outstanding sins of his time as "that Old Serpent." Jesus personified the greed of

the world as Mammon. In the same way the name Satan, and the Devil and his Angels, are used in Scripture to epitomise for us in one impressive figure the awful sum-total of evil which Christ came to sweep away.

The collective evil of the world is appalling in its magnitude, and appalling must be the pictured image which represents it, but the only portion of that evil which endangers our salvation is the enemy who is at such close grips with us in our carnal nature. So closely does this approximate to the whole of the hostile forces arrayed against us, that to subdue it, that is, to bring our own desires, and thoughts, and will, into subjection to the will of God, is to win a complete and decisive victory.

4. To be at our best in this fight, we must have not only caution, and hatred of evil, and confidence, but also thankfulness—thankfulness that we are fighting on this side and not on that, and thankfulness that we are permitted to fight at all. Temptation is a fact of our existence which has to be



reckoned with, but it is meant to be a blessing. If without it there could be no sin, it is equally true that, in finite beings, without it there could be no virtue. Moral strain is an essential element in moral progress. In this respect it may be compared with the effect of gravitation on the body. During most of our waking hours we are required to maintain the erect position, but to do this we have to resist from moment to moment a down-dragging pull equal to our own weight. We are so accustomed to this ever-present pressure that we are hardly aware of it until a false step, or an attack of faintness suspends for a moment our resistance, and at once down we go. This effect of gravitation involves the risk of falling, but to it also we owe all that is graceful in our form and movements, and our strength for the work of life. So with the effort, in spite of resistance, to be good. It will become a habit with us by and by—a habit of which, except at critical moments, we are hardly conscious, but nothing does so much to give beauty and stability to our character and life.

The advantage then of resisting temptation is not merely negative. It means far more than retaining what the temptation threatened to take away. Blessings are thus brought to us which otherwise would be unattainable. After a moral victory we are not only as good as before, but better, and the benefits thus gained belong to eternity. They abide, and abide for ever. And so, from the same infallible source as the prohibition, comes the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

# THE FALL

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

GENESIS iii. 6.



## VII

### THE FALL

SOMEWHERE in the country is an elevated spot from which you can see in one field of vision, or with only a slight turn of the head, three conspicuous objects. Right before you, on the outskirts of the town, is a hospital. Away up the valley on the right are the white stones of a cemetery, and away on the left the grey walls of a prison. And standing on that lone hillside you have brought at once before your mind the three facts to which human experience owes its darkest shadows. The hospital speaks to us of sickness and disease, the cemetery of death, and the prison of sin. Sad facts all of them, but it is universally admitted that the saddest by far is the last. Of all the evils of man-

kind, infinitely the worst is sin. Think of the cost of it, convict settlements, law courts, the locks, and bolts, and bars, we have to put on our doors and windows, our army of police, and, to a great extent, our military and naval forces, with the consequent serious taxation. What makes these things necessary is sin.

But sin is not only the cause of the third evil I have mentioned, it is to a very great extent responsible for the other two. Statistics show that a large proportion of the cases of sickness and death around us are due, directly or indirectly, to sin. It is the source of everything that is really bad in human character and life. But for sin, this earth would be like Heaven.

The passage I have read is an early attempt to explain how this awful evil came into our world, and, old as is the story, it has never been superseded. The most advanced conceptions of our own day are but the development of the nucleus given us here.

I. What then is sin according to this story? Simply it is this: doing that which One,

whom we instinctively recognise as the Supreme Authority, has told us not to do. What made the act of the first man and woman sinful was the fact recorded in the third verse—"Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

To the highest of the inferior animals two voices speak—the voice of appetite and passion, and the voice of a low form of reason, showing how that appetite and passion may be gratified: and to live in this way, for the gratification of their desires, is the normal healthy life of such creatures. These two voices—the voice of appetite, and the voice of reason—speak to us, and both of them, but, especially the latter, with much greater clearness and emphasis than to the inferior animals. We have our animal cravings just as a horse or a lion or a wolf has, and we have a far greater strength of reason to judge, whether, and when, and how it may be expedient to indulge those cravings.

But what happens to every child in the course of its development, happened to the first man when he emerged from the mere animal condition—a third voice began to speak to him—what we call conscience, giving a sense of moral distinction, the idea of right and wrong, and that conception of duty which represents for us the will of God. It was hearing this voice which made him man, and the capacity to hear it, which marks him off as so superior to all other living creatures of the earth.

These three voices then spoke to our first parents, the voice of appetite and inclination—“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes;” the voice of reason—“And a tree to be desired to make one wise;”—and then, very gently no doubt at first, but still recognised, the voice of conscience,—“And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Thou shalt not eat of it.”

When all three voices are agreed, there is no doubt what course to pursue, but, when



they are not agreed, when appetite and inclination say one thing, and reason and conscience say another, or when, as sometimes happens, and as happened in this case, reason agrees with appetite, and conscience stands alone, then we cannot decide without a struggle which to obey.

We know well which we ought to obey. Conscience, however feebly it speaks to us, has about it a tone of Divine authority. It sounds like the voice of God. We sin when, in defiance of our conscience, we do what one or both of the other voices say; when we make the higher part of our nature surrender to the lower, and give the mastery to the inferior part of us.

Of course the inferior part of us includes a great deal more than what are called appetites or passions of the flesh. Part of our mental constitution has come to us from below, and by the association of this with the other, arises the tendency to masterfulness, disregard for the rights of others, cupidity, and revenge. These and other evil dispositions,

the very worst in human nature, belong also to that lower part of us which, in the case supposed, has been made the instrument of sin.

It is not the inferior part of us which is to blame for this, but the higher part, which sins in yielding to it. The body does not sin, and indeed cannot sin. It may be made, as we have seen, the instrument of sin, but the sin is in the perverse will, which puts the body to such uses. Figuratively, Paul speaks of the sinful flesh, because it is so often thus misused, but he distinctly says that the seat of sin is in the mind and in the spirit, and, so far from the body being itself sinful, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

We have sins enough. Do not let us reckon with them things which are not sins. Why should we blame ourselves for what is perfectly natural, and, therefore, perfectly right? There is not a single inborn craving, or tendency of our nature which is in itself sinful. We are not to blame for having sensual appetites, nor are we to blame for

feeling the tug and strength of them. We are animals, as well as men and women, and every feeling belonging to the animal part of us is as innocent in us as in a sheep. It is in the control and guidance of these feelings that our human responsibility appears. It is perfectly natural for a young colt to kick up his heels, and roll over in the grass, and scamper round the field, and leap over the fences; and it is quite natural that he should try to do the same when I have him in the shafts, and am trying to break him in for harness. As I sit behind him in the dog-cart, it is no fault of mine, or his, that the spirited young animal tugs so at the reins, and tries to turn in this direction or in that. He is not to blame for pulling as he does, nor am I to blame for feeling it, and finding that it is all I can do to hold him in. There is no question of blame at all until I let the colt run away with me, and then the blame is mine, not his. Our lower nature is the colt which God has given us to break in, for His service. It cannot sin. It is irresponsible.

We cannot help our feelings; and they only become sinful when, against our better judgment, our will gives way to them, and lets them obtain the mastery.

All sin is of this nature. It means putting sense before reason, inclination before judgment, or anything whatever before moral conviction. It means doing what we want instead of what we ought, seeking the gratification of one part of our nature instead of the welfare of the whole, or our own welfare at the expense of the welfare of the community, and, so, pleasing ourselves instead of pleasing God.

If this is what sin is, it is not difficult to see how it arose. We sometimes speak of sin, as if it had a sort of separate existence, and could be independent of any definite act of sin; but though it is often convenient and perfectly intelligible, as a mode of speech, so to represent it, yet really there is no such thing as sin apart from sinful conduct or a sinful will. We speak of disease, but what disease? We speak of death, but whose



death? Death as a sort of skeleton-angel is nowhere to be found outside the poet's fancy. There is no such thing as disease or death, except in connection with diseased conditions, and the act of dying. And so with sin, it has no other meaning, as an actual fact, than doing or wanting to do sinful things.

Thinking of sin in this misleading abstract way we have wondered whence it came? "It could not," we say, "have arisen of itself, but must have been introduced from without," and, just as some would have us believe that the first living thing upon the earth fell to it from a star, so, assuming that man was created sinless, we have persuaded ourselves that sin was brought here by evil spirits from another world. But that only puts the difficulty a little farther back. If sin came from another world how did it begin there? If it was brought to earth by evil spirits, how did it come to them? Let us think of sin as, what indeed it is, continuing to do in a higher state of being what is not fitting there, but was fitting in a lower state, and

many of our perplexities will disappear. There are things which we may do innocently at one period of life, and not at another. What is excusable in a child may be inexcusable in a man, and, what is right for a man in a lower position may be wrong for him in a higher. Responsibility, increased intelligence, new relationships, bring with them new obligations, negative and positive, things to be avoided as well as things to be done, and sin means the failure to make the necessary readjustments.

Sin is an act which has only been made sin by the coming in of a higher law, by the conferring of a higher responsibility, the raising of man to a higher state of existence. Whatever the definite act may have been, the essence of the first man's sin was in living as an animal after he had become a man, and, in principle, this is what sin is in everybody—trying to apply the laws and principles of a lower stage of life to a higher stage—and sin began in the world, and began in the universe, when for the first time this was done.

II. When, then, was the first sin? There is no question about the fact of sin. It is here with us. It is everywhere to-day, and there must have been a first sin. What it actually was it is impossible for us to know, for it probably occurred at such an early stage of man's development that he had no means of recording it.

This story of the first sin is a parable, and is not to be taken literally. Divested of its poetry it tells us that the sin of our first parents was in doing something against their moral convictions, and something that may be figuratively represented as eating forbidden fruit. For all that matters in the story, we are not dependent upon the writer of it. His judgment tallies with our own, and what he says is confirmed by our own experience.

1. According to this account, what a trivial offence the first sin was! A full knowledge of the facts would probably show us that the actual first sin of man was something even simpler than the act here described. As with the first sin of ordinary childhood, it was

most likely one of the least guilty of all sins. Evil, like all other things, came into existence gradually, and if the whole moral history of mankind were brought before us, it might be quite impossible to say exactly when, and where, and how man crossed the line which divides innocence from sin.

Thoughtless people laugh at the idea of attaching importance to a little thing like this, and think it childish and absurd. But most of us know better. In every pursuit we begin at the small things, and go on to those which are greater. Before we read the Bible we must know the alphabet, and a man cannot do much at mathematics until he knows the simple rules. So with the pursuit of goodness. We must learn to obey our conscience in little things if our life is to be brought under its control.

Eating an apple, or a date, that for some reason or other one has no right to eat, does not seem a very serious thing ; but that depends upon circumstances, and we cannot say of the smallest thing that it is insignificant



until we know something of its effects. The pulling of the wrong lever in a signal box has wrecked a train. A spark from a workman's pipe has blown up a mine. A dropped match has burned down a city. There is no attitude of mind more dangerous to morality than that of pooh-poohing the beginning of evil because of its seeming unimportance. The first symptoms of some of the most serious diseases seem hardly worth noticing. Only an expert can see anything in them to be alarmed at. A slight change of temperature, a swollen gland, a dark spot here or there—but these little aberrations from the normal mean plague or cholera, and in nine cases out of ten plague and cholera mean death.

Those who talk lightly of what they call little sins, cannot have grasped the idea of what sin really is. The deadly cobra was once a tiny egg which a little child could have destroyed. It is because the egg was not destroyed that we have the serpent now. Disobedience is the violation of a principle, and

so is independent of the magnitude of the particular act by which it is expressed.

No act that is sinful can be considered trifling. We admit this in ordinary life. A merchant selecting a cashier does not ask how much or how little of other people's money the applicant for the office has appropriated, but has he appropriated any? And no one who knows anything about the subject would say that such a merchant was too particular. Dishonesty does not begin with embezzling bank-notes and forging cheques. It was some petty theft committed years ago—a theft which no one knows of but himself—it was this which determined the man's career, and set him on the way to the gigantic swindle for which he is now doing time at Parkhurst or Dartmoor. What we have to guard against are not so much the greater sins, but the little ones which lead up to them—the breaking of a Band-of-Hope boy's pledge, the first visit to some low place of amusement, the first introduction to a bad companion, the first game of chance for penny-stakes—such

apparently trivial things as these have again and again been the turning-point from good to evil, from life to death.

2. The sin in this case is represented as the gratification of a natural appetite.

There is always something to be said for the wrong things men do, and so there was in the case before us. From the standpoint both of sense and reason it might be argued that, in such circumstances, not only was what the first man did perfectly right, but that there was nothing else to do.

The fruit was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes. It was both wholesome and appetising. Why should not the man eat of it? May a thing seem good, and be good, to one part of the nature, and yet be evil? Common experience says, yes, it may. And it is a sin to choose even the good in preference to something better. Art, music, even trees and flowers, and beautiful scenery are evil when they lead to forgetfulness of God. It is wrong to nourish the body at the expense of the

character and soul. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." To eat even the best of food is deleterious when we eat it in opposition to the Divine command. The word must be always first. The soldier knows that—he must go where he is sent, and do his duty, whatever happens to his life.

3. This act of sin is represented also as an attempt to satisfy a very laudable ambition. "A tree to be desired to make one wise." Surely the pursuit of knowledge is not sinful. But it may be. Many an ancient legend, among other peoples than the Jews, has attributed man's hard lot to unlawful striving after knowledge. Primitive man's ideas upon the subject were erroneous, and often absurd, but behind the error there was truth. There is an unlawful striving after knowledge, as when we fail to keep the due balance in what we seek to know—eager for the lower knowledge and neglecting the higher, keeping our eyes so fixed upon the earth that we forget there are stars above us. Darwin has, with charac-



teristic candour, shown us in his autobiography that, just as the body may be developed at the expense of the mind, so the mind may be developed at the expense of those still higher faculties by which we appreciate music, respond to the appeals of poetry and beauty, and hold communion with God. Learning of itself neither purifies nor ennobles. Unless allied with moral principle, it often makes matters worse than they were before. If it gives increased capacity for loving service, it gives also increased capacity for selfishness. It extends enormously the possibilities in both directions. One may increase in knowledge, and, at the same time, decrease in goodness, and the net result in such a case is incalculable loss. Reason, like sense, and appetite, and passion, must be brought under the control of the higher law. If not, it will bring to us, and to those we influence, more of bane than blessing. Eating the fruit of the forbidden tree was sinful because it meant lawlessness of mind, putting knowledge before principle, and seeking to

enrich the understanding by the impoverishment of the character.

4. The woman's sin is represented here as not quite the same as the man's, and this old writer shows us what, in his view, was the characteristic weakness, and the characteristic strength of the masculine and feminine temperament. The New Testament explains that the woman sinned by allowing herself to be deceived, and the man by allowing himself to be persuaded. And this appears to be the teaching of the story. The woman was deceived, and observation shows that this is a more frequent cause of sin in women than in men. Women are not usually so suspicious of false reasoning as men, though far more reliable in their intuitions. A woman's mind, especially on moral questions, will often spring at once to the right conclusion, which a man arrives at later, and after a good deal of argument. So long as a woman is content to be guided by her own instinctive sense of what is right and good, she is morally stronger and safer

than a man. In this case the woman allowed herself to be drawn into a discussion of what never ought to be discussed. Newman was speaking both of men and women when he said, "In matters of conscience first thoughts are best." This is emphatically so with the quick, mobile nature of a woman. For her to parley with the tempter is to play into his hands, and, in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, to hesitate is to fall.

The man was persuaded, not deceived. He knew well what he was doing. The beginning of his sin was in putting the call of personal affection above the claims of duty and the voice of God. Of the two sinners he was the greater. He saw what lay before him, but he was reckless, and in his own rash, devil-may-care way he associated himself with his wife's wrong-doing.

III. How far are we justified in speaking of this first sin as the fall? The opinions of a later day upon this subject are far removed from the teachings of this old story, and to understand what the author of it meant we

must try to look at the facts from his standpoint. Of course, every sin is a fall ; but, as compared with other sins, what was in this case the nature and extent of the catastrophe ?

1. First, what was it in relation to the sinning pair ? We say that by that first sin Adam and Eve fell. But how far did they fall ? What did they fall from ? What was their condition before they sinned ? For several centuries it has been customary to regard the first man as, previous to his sin, a paragon of perfection. In the words of Dr. South, " Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam," and in the beautiful description of our first parents in "Paradise Lost," they are represented as perfect specimens of all that was good and refined and beautiful in the men and women of Milton's time.

There is nothing whatever in this story, or in any other part of Scripture, to support such a view. The only passages that can be possibly construed into a confirmation of the poet's idealistic picture, are those which tell



us that God created man in His own image. As already stated, this probably refers to our human self-consciousness and moral sense and liberty—the qualities which distinguish man from the inferior animals.

But whatever this likeness to God may have been, it was certainly not understood by the compiler of the Book of Genesis, that it was lost by eating the forbidden fruit, for the obvious meaning of the fifth chapter is that Adam transmitted it through Seth to his descendants, and that it belongs to the permanent possessions of the race. In the sixth verse of the ninth chapter this characteristic is again referred to, as giving a special sacredness to human life, and murder is declared to be a capital offence because of the image of God man bears.

But likeness to God, as here affirmed of the first human pair, is suggestive rather of half-latent faculty and capacity than of attainment; for their condition, as here described, was that of one of the lowliest stages of human existence, being like children, uncon-

scious of shame, without weapons or implements, ignorant of the most simple arts of civilised life, and not knowing at first the difference between right and wrong. In moral character they were very much like the animals from which they had ascended, neither good nor bad. This view of man's primitive condition is supported by the ancient legends of other lands; and the science of our time, in the light of the facts of evolution, says emphatically that the Bible is right, and that, except for the purposes of art, Milton and those who have followed him are wrong.

There is not the slightest hint anywhere that man's nature was any different after his sin from what it was before. His character was, but not his nature. Every act, good or bad, leaves its mark behind it, creating a track or rut of habit, and implanting an impulse to do the same again. It would be so in this case. But whatever dint may have thus been made upon man's character, the metal of his nature remained unchanged.

Morally, the first man had not far to fall. He did fall, but the fall appears to have awakened him ; his eyes were opened, and if—as it is implied—he did, by the mercy of God, recover himself, and rise again—he may have become—as is often the case with repentant souls—a better man afterwards than he was before.

2. How did the first man's sin affect the race? Adam threw the blame of his sin upon Eve, and we throw the blame of our sins upon them both. But though men have been seeking in this way for a millennium to shirk responsibility, it cannot be done. The writer of this story never dreamed that Adam's posterity would be morally the worse for their father's sin. He gives no hint of such a thing, and if he tells us that, of Adam's more immediate descendants, Cain and Lamech were murderers, he tells us also that Abel was righteous, and that Enoch walked with God. Not until the days of Noah do we hear of anything like universal sin.

As to the universality of sin now there can be no doubt. It is taught in the later books of the Old Testament, and in the New, and by Jesus Christ Himself, and it is a matter of common experience. But it does not follow that Adam is responsible for this, nor that it is through Adam's sin that we are sinners. There is, indeed, one difficult passage in the Epistle to the Romans which seems to connect the sin of the world with the sin of the first man; but with the exception of a verse or two, also of Paul's, in 1 Cor. xv., there is no other passage in the whole Bible to support it, and the most natural explanation of the passage is, that Paul was making use of a current Rabbinical opinion of his time, to illustrate that universal redemption, the proclamation of which was the one great object of his writing and of his ministry.

But not even in that difficult passage—not even as an illustration—does Paul say anything whatever about inherited sin. We have received from Adam the frail human nature



which he received, and its limitations expose us, as they exposed him, to accident, and disease, and mistake, and also, alas! to sin. Through him we are in danger of doing wrong, just as through him we are in danger of being poisoned or drowned, though this danger is not only far less serious, but in most cases far less imminent than the other. The only sense in which we owe our sinfulness to our descent from Adam is just that in which we owe to him every other characteristic of human nature. But to say that we fell in Adam, and that we were sinners before we were born, is neither to do honour to the character of God, nor to be fair to the teaching of His Word.

We talk about original sin, and build elaborate theories on it, but it is not so much as mentioned in the Bible, nor, as generally expounded, is there any adequate basis for such a conception. No child is born virtuous, and no child is born sinful. At birth all children are non-moral, and, so—like other living creatures—neither good nor bad. But

at least every child is born innocent — as innocent as Adam when first created. This is implied in the words of Jesus: “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” To speak of infant children as little sinners is to do them an injustice, and to run directly counter to the teaching of our Lord. In the interests of self-justification, there is something very attractive in the old notion that sin is hereditary, but, after all, it is safest to take our stand with Jesus who tells us that it is not.

But are not we the worse for Adam’s sin? Yes, but only in the same sense that people around us, and people who come after us, are worse for our sins. In this respect the first sin was not different from the second, or any subsequent sin, down to the sins of our own day. Adam had his own sin to answer for, why should he bear the blame of sins for which we are alone responsible?

In the universality of sin, and in the fact that children begin to do wrong so soon, we have evidence that sin tends to propagate itself. It does so in various ways. There is often a correspondence between the sins of parents and the sins of their children, and it is this which has given rise to the false conception of hereditary sin. In this respect sin resembles certain forms of physical disease. Consumption is not hereditary, neither is leprosy. Yet it is quite common for the children of consumptives and lepers to develop the disease of their parents. There is a double risk of this, for such children are born with a special susceptibility to the disease, and they are born into an infected atmosphere. These two things—special susceptibility, and infection from the parents, are quite sufficient to account for the fact that their children fall an easy prey to the disease.

So it is in the sphere of morals. No child of drunken parents is born a drunkard. No such child is born even with a craving or a taste for alcohol. But it is born with a

weakness of will, and instability of temperament which render it liable to fall into the sin of drunkenness if exposed to it : and in the home into which it is born, it is exposed to it every day. And so the innocent and untainted child grows up to follow its parents to a drunkard's grave.

With every kind of sin it is the same. Parents, however bad, cannot communicate by birth either the guilt or the stain of sin to their children, but they can and do communicate the sensual appetite, the unbalanced brain, the vacillating disposition, and other constitutional weaknesses which make temptation to sin so dangerous, and, then, after the child is born, they expose it to temptation in the example of their own vicious life.

But apart altogether from parental relationship, sin tends to propagate itself in the community. How it does so is well illustrated in this story. Sin does not end with the act of sinning. Others are soon involved. The woman "did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat." Do not



reproach the woman, as if she only acted in this way—everybody does. The man would, in like circumstances, have done the same. Men and women are repeating this conduct every day. There is always a partnership in disobedience. Does a man or woman ever go down without trying to drag another down? This is one of the saddest effects of sin. In a preceding verse we read: "It is not good for man to be alone." And now we hear the man lamenting: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat."

Two travellers, scaling an Alpine height, rope themselves together for mutual protection, but venturing too near the verge, one of them misses his foothold and goes over, and then the other, unwilling to cut the rope, goes over with him. So one man's sin and ruin lead to the sin and ruin of another.

In this part of the story we note a special emphasis upon the danger to the community of irreligion in a woman. Temptation from the outer world is never so serious as when

she becomes its agent. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Are we struck with the cowardice of this retort? Then we have missed the point of the story. The literary artist who composed it, is speaking from the standpoint of the race, and it is humanity that he thus dramatically represents as calling attention, through the lips of Adam, to one of the most melancholy facts of its history. Even a woman, by turning her back upon her spiritual convictions, may sink so far below the normal kindness of her nature as to seek to embroil those who love her best in the consequences of her misdoings. The worst, as the ancients knew, is ever the corruption of the best, and a fallen angel is a fiend.

The most effective way of bringing ruin upon a home is to persuade the women there to give up their religion, for the moral and spiritual ideals of mother, sister, wife, contribute more than any other outside influence to determine the career, and decide the fate of the men members of the household. No

Adam is safe with a fallen Eve. The personal persuasions of the unbelieving woman that he loves, punctuated by her tears, lay such siege to his heart, that only the strongest resolution can resist it. The man holds out for a time in loyalty to his convictions, but, if the woman perseveres, in far too many cases the resistance is overcome, and at length he says, in his infatuation and despair: "If I am hanged for it, if I am damned for it, whatever happens, you shall have your way."

Every act of wrong doing, whether of man or of woman, affects others. There is nothing we do, even in private, which does not lessen or increase our social, domestic, and political efficiency. After eating the forbidden fruit, however secretly, a woman will not be so good a wife, nor a man so good a husband, and neither of them will be the useful members of society they were before.

We can offer no affront to our conscience without thereby lowering the tone of society, and its standard of goodness, and so making

it a more dangerous community not only for ourselves, but for everybody. We have heard men say: "If I had been Adam, I would have been more careful." But, in every sense in which such words have any meaning, each one of us is Adam. There is no more need for us to sin than there was for him. Indeed, for us there is less excuse. We have the warning of his example, and all the teaching of the ages since. And, as to responsibility, there is no sin we can commit which will not do quite as much harm to those who come after us, to the end of time, as Adam's sin has done to us.

The cause of sin in us is not the sin of Adam. If the first man had not sinned, possibly some of his descendants would. His sin increased our moral risk, as our sin increases the moral risk of others, but risk is not compulsion. Our own responsibility is shown by our sense of freedom before we sin, and by our sense of shame afterwards. There would be no place for either, if sin were forced upon us.



We talk about fallen men and women, but that is what we all are. Adam fell : and just as inexcusably, and with just as serious results, we have fallen too. The writer of this story found the material for it in his own experience, for something corresponding with it had happened in his own life, as it has in ours. What we have here is a bit of general human history. Reading between the lines, we can see that this is a picture of our own life.

We had high ideals of what sort of men and women we were going to be. But perhaps there has been a tragedy in our experience. People do not know, and we do not intend them to know. Why should they? But we cannot forget the happy girlhood, or boyhood, and the promise with which our life began. All went well until the crisis came, and then we took the wrong turning. We made shipwreck of our faith. The tempting cluster of forbidden fruit was there before us, and, in a weak moment, we ate and fell—fell to the hardness, and unbelief, and

unspirituality which characterise our life to-day.

But our case is not hopeless. No case is. This is a faithful saying, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What then shall we do? Let us do what another did, who had wandered into a far country, and there wasted the most precious endowments of his humanity on what could never satisfy a nature such as ours. Thinking one day of the happy home he had forsaken, he pulled himself together, and said: "I will arise and go to my father," "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him:" and soon—

"All Heaven was ready to resound  
The dead's alive, the lost is found."

THE EXPULSION FROM THE  
GARDEN

“And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

“So He drove out the man: and He placed at the East of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

GENESIS iii. 22-24.



## VIII

### THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN

**O**BVIOUSLY an act cannot be judged apart from its effects. A simple thing like pulling the trigger of a gun may mean suicide, or murder, or only harmless play. The seriousness of sin is brought home to us by its consequences, and one may hazard the opinion that it was rather to explain the consequence of sin, than sin itself, that this old world moral philosopher adapted and edited these stories. He had been struck by certain abnormalities, as they seemed to him, in human life. The sense of shame, the wearing of clothes, the instinctive antipathy of man to serpents, and, chiefly, the hard, ill-requited toil of the husbandman, the sorrows of maternity, the marital subjection of the woman to

the man, and the unrelieved mystery of death. He wanted to account for these things, and he did so by attributing them all to that act of wilful disobedience to the Divine command with which we have been made familiar in this story.

Sin is not responsible for all these things, but for all that is really evil in them it is responsible, and the plain teaching of this narrative, when divested of its poetical embellishment is absolutely true to the facts of life as seen in our own experience to-day.

If anything is put to wrong uses, especially a complicated machine, it will inevitably be damaged. Sin means putting our human nature to wrong uses, and, according to the delicacy of our physical and mental mechanism, will be the disastrousness of so doing. Reason shows us that sin, being what it is, must be harmful, and experience proves that it is so, and without exception. Everything done against the law of our nature injures that nature, and the injury may be irreparable.

This is, in a word, the plain, matter-of-fact meaning of the pictorial account here given of Nature's punishment of the wrong-doer. Beginning in the fourteenth verse with the degradation of the tempter, it passes on to the difficulty of self-mastery, the sorrows and anxieties of family life, the humiliation of hard, grinding labour, and culminates in expulsion from the garden and exclusion from the tree of life.

In this expulsion from the garden we see, first of all, the disillusionment which invariably follows sin. There may have been no change of position. The sinning pair may still be where they were before. But sin has so disordered their power of seeing, or of appreciating what they see, that everything appears to have deteriorated. The forbidden tree was very attractive, but no sooner had they plucked its fruit than its attractiveness was gone. It had become positively repulsive to them—a hateful thing which they wished they had never seen. Sin spoiled for them the look of other things as well. It blunted their

sense of harmony and beauty, and cast a shadow on the glory of the world. Innocent pleasures, and lawful gratification of the senses had lost their zest. Even the singing of the birds, and the beauty of the flowers were not now what they had been before. And so their Eden vanished as a dream, and instead of a garden of delight they saw around them a waste, howling wilderness.

In every fall it is the same—Judas obtained by treachery his thirty pieces of silver, but, so far from bringing any satisfaction to the traitor, the mere possession of it was an agony beyond his power to bear, and we know his awful end. The story of Adam Bede is fiction, but it is evidently founded upon fact, and the counterpart of Hetty Sorrel is met with far too frequently. Pretty little Hetty—too ready to listen to the voice of the flatterer, too reluctant to listen to the counsel of her friends, decking herself with some new bit of finery to attract the notice of her admirer, tripping lightly among the flowers. Poor, bedraggled, little Hetty, in



prison, under sentence of death for the murder of her child. So near is the garden to the wilderness. And it was not the mere fact of her arrest and condemnation which transferred her from one to the other. The only essential element in Hetty's desolation was her sin.

These may be extreme cases, but the principle at the heart of them is operative in every act of sin. The force of gravitation which grips, and hurls a falling star, holds with just as tight a grip the grain of sand. The laws of Nature are active everywhere, and they are invariable, and irresistible. It is one of those laws we have to do with here. It drove our first parents from the garden, and it treats every wrong-doer in the same way. Sin always brings disillusionment.

The disillusionment was the more painful because it was immediately preceded by what seemed like great good fortune. "The man is become as one of Us." In self-consciousness, in the possession of moral sense, and of a certain measure of freedom, man was like

God already, and so far from losing that likeness by sin, the story tells us that he was in some respects more like God afterwards than he was before. The fact is that sin added to man's moral experience, and gave him that vivid sense of what wrongdoing means which can only be associated with innocence in an absolutely perfect being. In this, sin did make man more like God. He knew more—knew what he ought not to have known, for the gain of likeness in one direction was made at the expense of it in another. The gain was irregular, abnormal, one-sided. Likeness, to be worth anything, must be symmetrical, uniform, proportionate to the rest. It is not good for a baby to have a head as big as its father's. That will be all right some day, but to have such a head now means water on the brain and idiocy. And so this irregular addition to the points of man's resemblance to his Maker was not improvement but deformity.

“The man is become as one of Us.” “So He drove out the man.” What a strange anti-

climax we have here! To think that what can be described as increased likeness to God should have such a sequence. Wrong-doing always inverts things in this way. In a course of sin, whatever the sin may be, to be successful is to fail, to win is to lose, to triumph is to be defeated, and to eat of the food of the gods, by the sacrifice of principle, is to be cast out of the garden.

But expulsion from the garden, and exclusion from the tree of life, stand for restriction, and a certain curtailment of liberty. Sin makes this necessary, as every thoughtful person will admit. For one of the seeming advantages, gained for the sinner by his sin, is proficiency in sin. How deft some pickpockets and burglars are! In skilfulness they are nearer to the All-wise, by however insignificant a degree, than ordinary people are, and they become more skilful with each repetition of their crime. But as all sin is the enemy, not only of the sinner, but of the community and the race, every increase of cleverness in the wrong-doer makes him more

dangerous. The more God-like in skill and knowledge a transgressor is, the less fit is he for freedom. The greater the gifts and abilities associated with lawlessness, the more serious it is. The stronger a man is in his disobedience, the more necessary is it that he should be controlled.

This is one of the lessons of this story, and, when it is pointed out, it is obvious enough. If a donkey runs away it does not much matter; but when a horse refuses to obey the rein in a crowded thoroughfare the situation is dangerous, and the stronger, and swifter, and more spirited the animal, the worse it is. What the rein is to a horse that is conscience to a man. He who refuses to obey his conscience is, like a runaway horse, a continual menace to society, and the menace is in proportion to his powers. So it is to some extent with every sin, and it is in perfect harmony with the principles of our own criminal law that all sin should involve some sacrifice of liberty.

“So He drove out the man.” Divine power



does this automatically. It is a law of Nature that wrong-doing shall lead inevitably to some circumscribing of our freedom. It is of no use to rebel against this law. It is as fixed as any other. Abuse the privileges of the garden and out you go. Men and women, especially the young, are apt to imagine that whatever else sin means, it does mean larger liberty, more unreserved enjoyment, a wider area of activity, a greater expansion of thought, a broader, freer, fuller life. But sooner or later we all find out that the effect of sin is directly the reverse.

Sin restricts our capacity for true enjoyment. Thomas Godwin says, "The true Garden of Eden is in the gardener's own heart." And the more we see of life, the more sure we are, that our peace and comfort depend, not so much on where we happen to be, or what we happen to have, but on what we actually are. The secret of happiness is not in our circumstances but in ourselves. So it is that the natural effect of wrong-doing is to cast us out of the garden.

We are building here and there about the country what we call "garden-cities." The more there are of these the better. But, for the attainment of the chief object of this movement, the thing of prime importance is, not the situation, nor the climate, nor the size of the buildings, nor yet the trees, and fruits, and flowers—the one absolutely essential thing is the good character and disposition of the inhabitants. Whatever we are prepared to spend we cannot make a true garden-city for the bad. Wherever we may choose to live ourselves, whatsoever may be our surroundings—we are still dependent for our happiness upon the condition of our own heart and life; and there is no sin we ever commit which does not, in its degree, cut us off from those sweet experiences which only innocence can know.

Sin limits our capacity for goodness. It has already lost for us the ethereal state of innocence. We all have some remembrance of an early association with what seems to-day a far-away ideal, and from time to time we sing—

“My longing heart can never rest  
 Till Thou create my peace,  
 Till of my Eden repossessed,  
 From every sin I cease.”

“*My Eden*,” we rightly say—for this expulsion from the garden is not that of some remote ancestor only, but of you and me.

Life to all of us was an Eden-garden once, filled with fruits, and flowers, and all sweet fragrances, and music, and arched round with soft blue summer skies. Wistfully we think of childhood’s innocence, when conscience had not begun to frown, and Jesus Himself could look at us and say, “Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” We have been long ago forgiven, both by man and God, and have been for years respected members of the Church, but there is something we have lost which can never in this world be regained:—

“There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream  
 The earth and every common sight  
 To me did seem  
 Apparelled in celestial light,  
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
 It is not now as it hath been of yore,

## 234 EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN

Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now  
Can see no more."

This story of the expulsion from the garden is an ancient one, but it is at the same time, a modern one. It was written in a simpler age than ours, but it is strictly true to the experience of every sinning soul to-day. "He drove out the man."

Having lost by sin our natal innocence, we have thereby, to a serious extent, limited our power of doing right. It was possible, as we have seen, for the innocent to sin. It is highly probable that those who have sinned will sin again. Having sinned once, the tendency is to go on sinning. Sin creates the liability to sin, and thus changes the whole moral outlook and expectancy of life. By every act of disobedience to the conscience we damage our defences, expose ourselves to new temptations, and make easier the way to a career of wickedness. It is futile to say in contemplation of any act of sin—



“Only this once. After that all will come right.” It will not come right. No man can in this way set a limit to unrighteousness. Doing any wrong whatever means exchanging the security of the garden for the exposure of the wilderness.

The moral weakness thus induced clings to us even after we have been converted. Let us not be too hard on the imperfections of professing Christians. They have had a sinning, impenitent, unbelieving past, and they suffer from it still. As we often acknowledge in the familiar hymn—

“They who fain would serve Thee best,  
Are conscious most of wrong within,”

and one of the greatest saints, at the very zenith of his power, said “Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.” The effect upon body, mind, and disposition, of any affront offered to our conscience is most persistent, and here we

have another illustration of what exclusion from the garden means.

So with our power of serving our fellow-men—sin certainly limits this. We have heard one and another say—"I need not be a saint to be a philanthropist." But it is ever true that for the highest kind of philanthropy goodness is indispensable. Poverty, ill-health, imperfect education, may keep us back from many things we would like to do for others, but nothing so restricts and cripples us in our service of mankind as sin. Even the very fact of a fall—the memory of it, may exclude us from some forms of ministration for which we are otherwise well qualified. Ian Maclaren tells of a good and gifted man who persistently refused to accept an important office in the Church, which was repeatedly thrust upon him, and for which he was eminently suited, because in his youthful days he had eaten forbidden fruit. That sin had driven him out of the garden, and a flaming sword prevented his return.

But apart from its effect upon our own

memory and feelings, wrong-doing robs us of our influence. The tradition has been handed down to us that Moses was excluded from the Promised Land because of a fit of temper and a hasty word. David had upon his hands the bloodstains of many wars, and to the moral sense of the best of his contemporaries it was not seemly for such a man to build the Temple of the Lord. These are but striking examples of what is a matter of everyday experience. There are few of us who have arrived at years of maturity, who cannot see how much more useful we might have been, if we had acted differently at some crisis in our career. Young men of generous impulses and high ideals of future service for humanity, have need to ponder this. The realization of those ideals depends upon what we are doing now. We can never separate ourselves from our past history. Every act of violence done to our convictions will impair our future usefulness, and impair it for ever. Again and again the gratification of an appetite unlawfully—the eating of forbidden fruit—has meant

to men a loss of power, and a restricted sphere of service, to the end of their days.

In every way a fallen life is a restricted life. We want to have what we cannot have, and do what we cannot do, and be what we cannot be. The later life of some who have thus missed their way is one long yearning for what has become impossible.

“Oh! could I feel as I have felt, or be what I have  
been,  
Or weep as I could once have wept, o’er many a  
vanished scene,  
As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish  
though they be,  
So midst the withered waste of life, those tears would  
flow to me.”

It is the lost garden the poet is thinking of—the Eden of an ideal character, an ideal life, an ideal service. By their wrong-doing men have shut themselves out of this garden, and the flaming sword of destiny threatens to cut off for ever the hope of their return.

But it is suggested here that exclusion from the garden means exclusion from immortality.



“A flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” What are we to understand by this? It has been generally assumed that man became subject to death by eating the forbidden fruit. But that is not the teaching of this passage. It takes it for granted that man was mortal, but suggests that he would become immortal, if only he could eat of the fruit of the tree of life. The menace connected with the prohibition—“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”—was intended by the writer to mean just what it said. It was a threat, not of dying some day, but of instant death if the command were disobeyed. That threat was not fulfilled because, as the writer quietly assumes, God chose to pardon man instead—as, indeed, He so often has done since.

Liability to death could not have been regarded by the author of this story as a part of the curse of sin, for the statement he records in the nineteenth verse of this chapter—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou

return"—is equivalent to a declaration that, for a body made out of dust, death is the natural end. Again, in verse twenty-two, it is taken as a matter of course that man will die unless he eats of the tree of life. Why? Not because he has broken the command, but because he is mortal. Both verses regard man as naturally subject to death, but as capable of immortality.

Paul's word—"As in Adam all die"—must, in its literal meaning, be understood of the old Adam of our animal nature. Adam, as a human being, was connected with the inferior creatures, and was therefore mortal, and we, being human, are mortal too. With the first man, as with every man, it is through our bodily relation to other animals, and not through any wrong that we or other men have done, that, like the animals, we have to die. "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Christ represents the tree of life, the principle of that immortality which can only come to man through the relation of his spiritual nature to God. Death is from below, life from above.

There is nothing here then to suggest that death came into the world through eating the forbidden fruit, and it certainly did not. There was death in the world long before man came upon the scene. We have evidence enough of that in any of our museums, in the fossil remains of extinct animals which lived and died ages before man appeared. Moreover, man could not have continued to live indefinitely upon the earth, even if he had not sinned. There is not room enough. By the average rate of multiplication, if there had been no death, long before the beginning of our era, not only would human beings have occupied every inch of ground, but they would have been piled up miles high above it. Obviously it was never intended that man should stay in this world for ever.

Of course it is possible that if man had not sinned, provision might have been made whereby, at a ripe old age, he would have passed away from the material sphere by an insensible refinement and sublimation of the natural body into the spiritual body, and

without the humiliating circumstances of ordinary dissolution. But this is pure speculation. There is no evidence to support it.

But if sin did not, in this sense, bring death into the world, it is sin that makes it the thing of dread which it is to us to-day. "The sting of death is sin." It is because of sin that we give to death the title "King of Terrors." And if sin makes death awful, it tends also to make it premature and frequent. Sin is not only saddening and restrictive, it is a killing, fatal thing. Wrong-doing of every kind tends to shorten life. Intemperance and sensual indulgence obviously have this effect, and directly, or indirectly, all sin is in this respect the same. Sin is against Nature, and what is against Nature must be against health and life.

If sin has this effect now, there is every reason to believe that it will have this effect always; and in this inflexible law we have a hint of what is meant by the "flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way to the tree of life."



“The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.” There is a purpose, and a beneficent purpose, in every restriction God imposes. In the twenty-second verse it is indeed suggested that the Creator was jealous of man’s newly acquired power. The same thought is expressed in the story of the Tower of Babel. This is no doubt a heathen relic from an earlier version of the story. We meet with similar ideas in the mythology of Greece, and of other ancient lands. But the Jews were fast outgrowing those absurd infantile conceptions when the story took its present form, and, with the light we have to-day, it is impossible to suspect such a thing as jealousy or vindictiveness in God. It is hard to imagine a man being jealous of a cheese-mite, but man’s exaltation over a cheese-mite is as nothing to God’s exaltation over man. That God should stoop to pity men is wonderful, but that He should be jealous of them is quite unthinkable.

Whatever God does with the very worst of

## 244 EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN

men is intended either to promote their recovery, or to exterminate their sin. Restriction was made necessary by man's abuse of liberty; and the restriction was imposed for man's protection—to fit him for receiving liberty again, to teach him its value, its seriousness, and the awful responsibility associated with it.

We are apt to think that the easier the conditions of life the better. One object of this story is to correct that misconception. To have everything that heart can wish is not good for any man. It exposes him to the risk of limpness and degeneration. Work is necessary for us all, but many will not work unless they are compelled. So God drove out the man, and set the Cherubim and the flaming sword to keep him out. Men prize most what they have won by their own exertions, and it has been the making of many a man to be thrown upon his own resources, and driven out into the wilderness to earn his bread. Man was driven out that, by the discipline of the wilderness, he might acquire that robust-

ness of character which would enable him to regain what by his disobedience he had lost.

The same kind purpose is expressed in God's limitation of our earthly life. Its brevity and uncertainty enhance its value, and induce the desire to make the most of it. Some men are careless enough now with regard to the great purposes of life, and if we were permitted to remain here for ever, this carelessness would so increase that the world would become a hell. Life is precious, and the limitation of our life on earth helps to make us aware of its preciousness, and of the importance of seeking to turn it to good account.

By the imaginary picture of the Cherubim and the flaming sword the author of the story gives expression to his belief that what has been lost may be regained—that the ideal of perfect manhood is still where it always was, and that somewhere or other, in the tree of life, is the secret of immortality. The invincibility of the guardians is assured to us as a guarantee of the absolute safety of what they

guard. We used to sing as children, "There is a better world, they say, Oh! so bright," and there is no reason why in our riper or our declining years we should not sing it still. The better world is still there.

But in this story we see the working of that inexorable law, which we have daily opportunities of putting to the test in our own life, and which is stated with such clearness and emphasis in the Book of the Revelation—"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." The place for uncleansed souls can only be outside the gates. In the eternal fitness of things it must be so. If men persist in sin, wrecking the delicate organism God has given them, and doing it over and over again after it has been repaired, why should they be allowed to live on eternally a maimed and mutilated life? The kindest thing to do with such is surely to put them out of their misery, or rather to let them do it by leaving them to the natural consequences of their misdoings. If then our welfare and our immortality depend upon what we are, we carry our fate about



with us, and the sin which here on earth shortens our life may rob us of it altogether. Against the persistently unrighteous the gates of heaven will be found guarded as were the gates of Eden—a flaming sword turning every way, and making for ever inaccessible the tree of life.

It is, then, the wildest folly to give up trying to be good. “But,” you say, “having sinned, I am outside the garden, and that is the end of it.” No—do, or leave undone what you will—this cannot be the end. Whatever we may have in our possession now, there is always something a good deal better to be had. Yes, and there is always something a good deal worse. Where you are may be a wilderness compared with where you were before, and where you might still have been, but it is a veritable Eden compared with what lies beyond. It is true we are far below the summit, but we are still far above the lowest depths. Every sin means a new expulsion, a new restriction, a wilder, lonelier wilderness. It may be gloomy here, but there is ever an outer darkness

## 248 EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN

gloomier still. Whatever effort it may cost, let us not sink lower, not risk a new expulsion, not move from where we are except to go up higher—

“For this is life, to love the light,  
To seek the best, to ask for all,  
To seek a city out of sight,  
In spite of failure and of fall.”

It is not wise to spend our time in complaining of the restrictions and deprivations of this present life. Rather let us try to make good use, and the best use, of what we have. We have been driven out into the wilderness that we may cultivate it, and make for ourselves a garden there. The garden ready made for us was the place of our defeat; the wilderness may be to us, as it was to Jesus, the place of victory. Here is seed. Around us everywhere is fertile soil. Above us is the sunshine. The clouds on the horizon are bringing the fertilizing showers. What more do we require? Let us go out and till the soil, root up the thistles and the thorns, put in the seed, and

sooner or later we shall see growing up around us an Eden better than the first—even here we shall sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and, having obtained whatever good this world can afford, at length the long-closed gates shall be thrown open, and so an entrance shall be administered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.





# RESTORATION IN CHRIST

**“Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation : the old things are passed away : behold they are become new.”**

**2 CORINTHIANS v. 17, Revised Version, margin.**

## IX

### RESTORATION IN CHRIST

WE have already had before us two Creation stories—one in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, and the other in the second and third chapters—both stories describing the creation of the world and of man. Here we have a reference to another Creation story, dealing with a quite different manifestation of creative power, and one that is in some respects far more important, for, as Samuel Wesley sings—

“’Twas great to speak a world from nought,  
’Twas greater to redeem.”

In Genesis iii. 15 we have the curse of the serpent—“And I will put enmity between thee

and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This has been construed into a promise of salvation, but to do this is to read into the old story conceptions of a much later day. There is no reason to suppose that the author of the story had any thought of the Messiah when he wrote these words. They do lend themselves to a striking evangelical analogy, and may be thus used to illustrate the message of the Gospel. But what the writer evidently had in mind was the perpetual feud between serpents and men—the heel and the head simply representing the most exposed and vulnerable parts of each—and the only higher truth he would be likely to associate with this feud would be the persistence of temptation.

If anything suggestive of Christian hope is to be found in these old stories it is the fact that the penalty of disobedience was not immediately inflicted, and that the garden of Eden and the tree of life were protected instead of being destroyed.



Without this later Creation story the earlier ones would be tragically disappointing. The account of man's beginning, in the first chapter of Genesis, represents him as the last and noblest of the works of God; but in the third chapter he is seen turning aside to sin, and being thereby driven out into the wilds. If that had been the end, it would have meant the passing-away of the human race. But creative energy had not exhausted its resources. Man, even in his disobedience, was loved and pitied by Him who made him, and so something happened—something by which his defeat was turned into victory, his fall into a rise, and even his experience of sin into material for establishing and confirming him in righteousness. What it was that happened cannot, in the light of the later revelation, be better expressed than it is here—"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation."

I. The power by which a sinful man or woman is delivered from the guilt, and bondage, and destructiveness of sin, operates through what corresponds with an act of creation. It

does not come as a matter of course, nor by any unfolding or fructification of our own resources. Sin being what it is, the sinner, if left to himself, must have perished. Let a man bore a hole in the bottom of the ship and the water begins at once to come in—yes, and it continues to come in after he has ceased boring. We have only to start a conflagration, and, if it be not interfered with, the fire will go on burning until there is no more left to burn.

Nothing is more certain than Nature's antagonism to sin, and its set purpose to get rid of it. Its first way of getting rid of sin is to get rid of the sinner, and so the crowning result of Nature's providence is sometimes represented as "the survival of the fittest." But, among responsible beings, the permanently fit are only the morally fit. So the survival of the fittest among men means the survival of the good.

That such a law is in operation can be verified by ordinary observation. The destructiveness of some forms of sin, such as

intemperance and sensuality, is evident to all, but with every kind of sin it is the same. A selfish, avaricious, and dishonest man may take care of his body, and never give way to the passions of the flesh, but sooner or later the wrong done to the higher nature reacts upon the lower, and brings upon the whole man sin's inevitable doom. Certain types of animal, once very prolific—as we know from their fossil remains—have become extinct. They have altogether disappeared. Certain types and races of men have disappeared also; others are disappearing; and, in the human sphere, the determining factor of such disappearances is generally sin.

We have all an entail of susceptibility to sin. Our duty is to fight against that susceptibility, and so hand down less of it to our descendants. But some families yield to it; their members one after another give way to vicious propensities, and in a few generations, as statistics show, those families are completely wiped out. In all these cases we only see an acuter and more rapid form

of a process which is always associated with wrong-doing. It is a law of Nature, absolute and invariable, that every act of disobedience to the conscience means degeneration ; and such degeneration, unless arrested, means ultimate destruction. As surely as the monsters of the primeval slime have gone, and left no descendants, so will it be with families, and tribes, and nations that persist in sin.

But if this is the natural tendency of sin, how is it that the human race has continued to exist ? Because this great moral emergency has been met by what we have come to speak of as the Divine expedient of redemption. Over against that law of Nature by which sin persists and destroys, has been set that higher law which culminated in the new act of creation referred to here, and by which provision is made for all those who really desire it, to be delivered from their sins.

This is the most wonderful thing in human history, or the history of the world. We sometimes say of one who has come scathless



through an accident, "His escape was a miracle"; but it is a miracle, indeed, for one to be checked in a career of sin. When a man has fallen over a precipice, he goes on falling until he is dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Between sin and its consequences there is the same close connection. It is natural for a sinner to go on sinning, and to perish in his sins. It is supernatural for him to turn away from his sin, and be saved.

Some serious thinkers have refused to believe that sin can ever be either forgiven or overcome, and as far as the ordinary laws of Nature are concerned, such doubt is justified. For an arrow or a bullet shot at a target, there is just one line, and one line only, by which it can reach the point aimed at. If it once deviates from that line, however slightly, it can never get into it again, and so cannot hit the mark. Sin, according to one of the commonest meanings of the word, in the Old Testament and the New, is a missing of the mark; and in this case the arrow that misses is not something

that goes forth from us—it is our own personal self. To turn aside to sin is, naturally, to change for ever the direction of our life.

There are inferior animals upon the earth to-day, whose remote ancestors were once with ours, in the direct line of those living creatures which in after ages developed into men ; but, at some stage or other in the course of their evolution, they fell short of the best possible, and so their latest progeny are beasts of the earth instead of men, and they will never be anything else. With one exception, man, to get off the line is to keep off the line to the end.

It would have been the same with man but for two things: first, our own will—that power of self-determination which enables us to get hold of something, if we can find it, by which we can draw ourselves towards the right line again ; and secondly, and far more important, that manifestation of creative power which has given us something to lay hold of.

The first — our own will-power — cannot take us very far on the path of restoration without the second. We have tried to reform ourselves ; and by being careful about what company we keep, what books we read, what places we frequent, a marked improvement may have been effected in our life. But as soon as we have a clear perception of the ideal—that ideal which, however befogged and beclouded, is placed before the eyes of everyone, and which is an outline-plan of what God meant us all to be—as soon as this ideal of true, and noble, and holy manhood and womanhood comes into view, we become aware of our utter powerlessness to reach it.

We can climb the mountain by strenuous effort, and it is better to do that than stay below ; but we want to be among the white-winged birds in the blue heavens. Nothing on earth can satisfy us. “ They aim too low who aim beneath the skies.” But to get there, climbing will not avail ; we must fly, and our wings have been broken by our sin. Good intentions and desires we have, but our

unrighteousness has crippled us. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. I delight in the law after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." The effect of past wrong-doing, like a dead-weight, holds us down, and so again we hear one of the best men who ever lived exclaiming, at the extreme end of his endeavours—"Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Obviously, much more than a new stimulus to development was required for sinning man. It is of no use to put on steam when the engine is off the line. To advance in such circumstances is to go from bad to worse. By doing violence to his convictions man had jumped the metals, and to restore him to the track—to give again the right direction to his life—nothing would suffice but such a Divine interposition as can only be described as an act of creation.



In the course of evolution, as generally understood, there are certain breaks or chasms which, with the knowledge at present at our disposal, can only be bridged over by supposing, that at each of these stages there were special creative acts. There is the chasm between the formless void and the material universe ; another between matter and life ; another between sentient life and man ; and there is a fourth between the ordinary sinful man and the regenerate man. The best explanation that can be given of the transition from one to the other is that we find in the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Then, in the dim dawn of the world's history, within the sphere of dead matter, He created the first germ of life ; later, within the sphere of living things, He created man ; and now, last of all, He has, within the human sphere, by another definite act of creation, raised up the Christ-man. As, at some advanced stage of its evolution, an inferior animal became, by the Divine touch, a man, so by a similar

Divine touch, the carnal man becomes a spiritual man, and enters upon a new course of development. "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation." Conviction, repentance, hope, and trust, are human ; for these, in favourable circumstances, our own resources are sufficient ; but forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration can only take place by the direct act of God.

II. This is spoken of not only as a creation, but as a *new* creation. We might from this infer that it was an afterthought, but there are no afterthoughts with God. Whatever else the Gospel may be, it is not a new departure, but a fulfilment of the Creator's original design. There has been no break in His method of dealing with mankind. Everything was anticipated from the start—even our sin—and whatever the Gospel has for us to-day existed in germ form in the beginning. In our bodies there is provision for the spontaneous healing of all but the most serious injuries, and a similar eternal provision has been made for the healing of our souls.

Man's first sin would have been fatal but for that, and so would every sin.

But a new stage of creation always means an advanced stage, and this is implied here. The reference is to a state of things, not merely as good as it was at the beginning, but better. A re-made or rebuilt thing is still a second-hand thing. "As good as new"—we say, and we thus admit that it is not new. But what is spoken of here is a new creation; and not only another creation, but a higher one.

Progression is always characteristic of the works of God, and the Creation story has made this plain. There was dead matter only to begin with; then came lower forms of life, then higher forms of life, and then man. And so with man himself: there is first the natural man, then last of all the spiritual man; and just as the natural man is superior to the animals below him, so is the spiritual man superior to the natural man. The new creation means lifting mankind to a higher level both of experience and hope than it had

ever attained before. The sinner of the Eden story more than recovered himself, as we have seen, through Divine help and mercy; and so it has been potentially with the whole human race. Christ means so much to men that, as we sometimes sing—

“In Him the tribes of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost.”

Of those who have been the subjects of this new creation, no two, however accurately they try to speak, will describe what it means to them in the same way. We use the language and forms of speech we have been accustomed to, and a plain man, borrowing the phraseology of his own religious communion, may express what salvation means to him in words which are an offence to those who prefer definitions that are more philosophical or scientific; but the plain man's description may be just as near the truth as theirs, for whatever the wealth of language, it must fail to represent adequately so transcendent an experience.

The experience is a fact, however it may



be defined. "Old things are passed away;" and among the first to go is the feeling of personal guilt. This may be destroyed in other ways. Persistence in sin has this effect, but by what is equivalent to spiritual suicide. To drown oneself is to put an end to every bodily ache and pain, but it is a method no one will commend. The marvel of this new creation is that while spiritual sensitiveness is so much increased, and the seriousness of sin is seen as it was never seen before, yet the remorse and condemnation of it are gone.

The domination of sin has passed away also. We are no longer its slaves. Slaves are compelled to serve their master—they are helpless in his hands. From such bondage to sin the new creation has set us free. It still exists as a member of the community in which we live, and it may stop us in the road, and assault us, and attempt to recapture us; but the laws of the new order to which we have been admitted are on our side against sin, and so we may always resist and master it.

A new creation implies not only something better, but something of a new kind. Earlier creations represent lower stages, and more imperfect forms of creatures which still exist, but each later creation means, not only improvement of an existing type, it means something added that has never appeared before. Such is the effect of the creation we are considering now. The old conceptions, the old tastes, the old aspirations have given place to far higher ones; and with these come new interests, new pursuits, new power for service, a new life, and, with this, experiences so utterly different from any we have known that we can only say of them, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." At the creative word of God "Old things are passed away. Behold"—as if by the touch of some magic wand—"Behold all things are become new."

It is this which makes the result of this new creation so extremely puzzling to those

who have not experienced it. The Christian life is always an enigma to the carnal mind. Each succeeding stage of creation must in like manner have been quite incomprehensible to the lower stage, and, remembering our earlier misconceptions with regard to the higher life, we have wondered whether the ancestral ape thought as we have done, and gibbered as he thought, when he saw men beginning to plough the land, and build houses, instead of sitting all day in the trees as once they did, and as he still did himself. We are often too ready to sneer at what we are not wise enough, or good enough, or spiritually mature enough to understand. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

III. "If any man is in *Christ*, there is a new creation." It centres in Him. From the beginning God has been carrying on man's evolution in spite of his sin, and Christ represents to us that advanced creative move-

ment by which the original Divine purpose is accomplished and revealed.

We cannot really know what a thing is until we know what it is going to become. Without an oak we cannot understand an acorn, and without Christ we cannot understand mankind. In Him we see in its completeness, what we see in an inchoate form, in all who are the subjects of this new creation. Christ is God's first and last ideal for the human race. The new creation thus explains all previous ones. Each earlier stage from the beginning was preparatory to this.

As with the progress of a building or a statue the design of the architect or sculptor begins gradually to reveal itself, so we are coming to see in the complexity of Nature the working-out of one great moral and spiritual purpose; and it is becoming more evident from day to day, that the production of character is the supreme object of all the movements of the world. That character in its highest form we see in Christ. He is the beginning and the end, the expression and



the agent of this new and last stage of spiritual evolution.

We see in Christ the perfect type of the spiritual man, and that represents a new creation. Our humanity, as seen in Christ, differs from that of the ordinary man as the ordinary man differs from the inferior animals. It is easy to point out correspondences between the higher and the lower in either case. A beast of the field does in many things so closely resemble a human being that, dwelling upon these alone, it might very plausibly be argued that there is nothing to choose between them. So, when Christ and those in Christ are compared with ordinary men, the resemblances are evident to everyone; but whether in the relation of men to the inferior animals, or of Christ and Christ-men to other men, it is not what is common to both, but what is superadded, which makes the one so immensely superior to the other.

The appearing of such a being in the human family cannot be accounted for in the ordinary way. Our attempts to explain it

must be inadequate, for the mind of man staggers beneath the burden of so great a mystery. But the contrast between the rest of the race and Jesus Christ gives support to the belief, that in one we see the ascent of man, and in the other the descent of God. In other men we have a nature raised from the dust, and made capable of union with the Divine Nature; in Christ we have the Divine Nature clothing itself with our humanity. The meeting point has been reached from different directions. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."

"If any man is in Christ there is a new creation." That is, Christ represents the beginning of a new order of human beings. He stands out in history not as an isolated fact, unrelated to the race, but as the introduction of a new type of man which must in the end supersede all others. He is called "the First-born of all creation;" and this suggests, not only priority and supremacy, but a succession. It is the purpose of God that all men should

be conformed to the image of His Son; and so He is called also "the Firstborn among many brethren."

However incomprehensible the spirituality of Christ may be, and however remote from that of ordinary men, there is a relationship between the two. It is true that men rejected Christ, and crucified Him, and that a similarly bitter hostility to Him, and to His followers is seen in some sections of Society to-day. But hatred seldom becomes so virulent apart from kinship; and it always overreaches and defeats itself. There is something in us all which makes us, in spite of ourselves, respond in some way to the appeal of Christ.

This new creation began very quietly, without any evident sign of what it was. There was little to suggest that the Babe in Bethlehem was what He has proved Himself to be. With former creations it was the same. A streak of vapour was the beginning of the material universe. A speck of moving jelly was the first ancestor of all the living

creatures of the earth; and our first human ancestor was hardly distinguishable from the animals immediately below him. When man first appeared in the primeval forest, a helpless, unclad creature, hiding in caves and hollow trees from the fierce animals around him, if an angel, gazing at the scene, had been told that this creature, so weak and so defenceless, and, to all appearance, so inferior to the others, should some day subdue all the living creatures of the earth, build great cities, obtain the mastery of the world, and be what he is to-day—even an angel might well have refused to believe it. So with the beginning of that new creation we have in Jesus Christ. There was nothing in the outward circumstances of Jesus—His social position, His poverty, His death as a common malefactor—which did not point to the very opposite of what has taken place. To speak of all these things is only to make the wonder of the after-developments the greater. For in both cases what was foretold has come to pass. Man has subdued the world, and



built great cities, and raised himself to the position he occupies to-day; and—wonder of wonders—One who appeared as the humblest of men has far outstripped all others.

To think that a Jewish peasant, the leader of a group of fishermen-disciples, and ending His earthly life as a lonely and forsaken victim on the Cross, should some day have a name that is above every name! How wildly incredible it must once have seemed! But it has come to pass.

When, in the first century after the withdrawal of Jesus from the world, His followers ventured to assert His triumph, it seemed so monstrous to those who heard it that even courts of justice said: "Away with the mad fools to the lions; they are not fit to live." But that for which the martyrs bled has come to pass. There is no name in the wide world which can enter into rivalry with that of Jesus now.

He has already made such an impression on mankind that we have come to date everything from His birth. We measure back-

ward from the Advent to the remotest past, and forward from it to the facts of our own time. Even infidels, who say they will have nothing to do with Jesus, mark all their correspondence with the time of His coming into the world. This is rapidly becoming the universal custom. Every remote little country in the world, that is civilized enough to have a newspaper, makes this acknowledgment of the pre-eminence of Christ. Turkish newspapers have their A.H., but, beside it, they have also our Christian A.D.; and so with the latest newspapers of China and Japan, they are dated from the year of our Lord.

This is but representative of the vast and ever-growing influence of Jesus in the universal life of men. What is the explanation of it? There is only one serious explanation before the world. It is this—the instinctive recognition of the fact that there is something in Him which is vital to the well-being of the race, and that in the experience of thousands upon thousands, and millions upon

millions, in every generation since, Paul's assertion has been verified: "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new."

Living in a Christian community, we are all familiar with those who have had this experience. There are religious people who are mere professors, for the reputation of goodness, like other things of value, will be desired by many who are not disposed to pay the price required. But we all know men and women whose piety is not a sham. In the case of some of these, there could hardly be a greater contrast than that between what they were and what they are.

But it is only from the inside that we can really understand the wonders of this new creation. We must experience it if we would know it—must feel the spell of Christ's life upon our own. It is only those who are in the house who know the comfort of it, and the views it commands from its windows; and it is only those who are in actual fellow-

ship with Christ who can have any adequate conception of what it means.

Some of us can bear our own testimony to the transforming effect of union with Christ. Men may criticize and find fault with us, and we have often to admit that they have good reason to do so. But, knowing ourselves as we do, we are bound to assert that if it were not for the hold we have of Christ, and the hold we feel He has of us, there would be infinitely more to find fault with than there is.

How the change has been effected—by what interaction of forces—we do not know. In an act of creation we have a cause and an effect, but the connecting link between the two is hidden from us. “God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” Science and philosophy have been busy for ages in trying to explain how the phenomenon called Light has been produced; but the explanations have, one after another, been discredited, and we have nothing better than a theory upon the subject now. But these changes of opinion



have not in the least affected the original position. God willed it: and so it was.

In the higher sphere of the spiritual life it is the same. Christ is to us the Word of God—the eternal expression of the Divine purpose with regard to our humanity. We have Christ as the Cause, and the regenerated soul as the effect; and the interval between the two we have tried, and are ever trying, to fill up. Our theories of the Incarnation, the Atonement, Regeneration, and much of our general theology, are attempts to explain the means and methods of the new creation. It is not likely that generations of some of the best and wisest men in the world have thought in vain upon these subjects; yet we may be sure that many of their conclusions are only of service as working hypotheses, and have no permanent value. But, whether the explanations are true or false, the cause and effect remain just where they were before—"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation."

That there is a connection between Christ

and all that is best in human life, few who know anything about the subject will deny. Among well-informed people diversity of opinion can only arise with regard to the nature of that connection—is it accidental or essential? Some unbelievers who are perfectly sincere, and who have high ideals, will sometimes point unwittingly to what are really the fruits of Christianity, in themselves or in others who share their opinions, as evidence of a high moral and spiritual excellence that is independent of Jesus Christ. But this is very much the same as if we were to point to the barrel of rosy apples in our cellar as proof of our independence of the sun. True the apples are far enough removed from the sunshine now, but they are the product of it; we could not have had them without it. And so with the virtues found in the cellars of agnosticism and unbelief. It is certain they did not originate there. They are due to Christian influences, Christian teaching, Christian example, Christian ancestry; they represent Christian motives and Christian ideals;

and the uplands on which they grew were bathed with the warmth and glory of Him who is the Light of the world.

“If any man is in Christ”—and whosoever will, may be. Christianity, as rightly understood, is not confined even to Christian lands. The presence and influence of Christ extends beyond the knowledge of His Name. The true Light “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” There are areas of ordinary human life with which He claims to be identified. The union is very close. We are not merely parts of that of which He is the best and greatest part, but parts of that of which He is the whole. There is what we may call a sleeping Christ even in the worst of men ; for He represents a universal Divine element in our humanity. What has been seen and told of the historic Jesus, is but the one brightest spot in a firmament of glory which compasses all mankind. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

It is for us to allow this union to become

effective, and to do what we can to make it so. We may be surrounded by an element, and even permeated by it, and yet get no advantage from it. Franklin brought himself into effective relation with universal electricity by means of his kite and key, as our manufacturers are doing, on a larger scale, by their dynamos. So it is with ourselves in relation to the universal Spirit. But what is required to make our union with Christ effective is very simple. To bring ourselves within the sphere of His creative influence is not a matter of locality, or institution, or ceremony, or occasion, or authorized person, but simply of desire and will. To really want Christ is to have Him. All that is best in us must want Him; and, so, the determining act of our salvation is yielding to our own best desires, in the assurance that, our desires being Christward, what is lacking He will supply, and where our will-power fails He will reinforce it.

Upon this whole-hearted surrender, the two natures—the man and Christ—the human and



Divine—begin to work harmoniously together. Everything is readjusted. The lost balance is restored. The higher part of our nature rules: the lower serves. Christ takes His right position in our affections, our aspirations, and our will. Exalting Christ we are exalted too. We become actually incorporated with Him. “I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

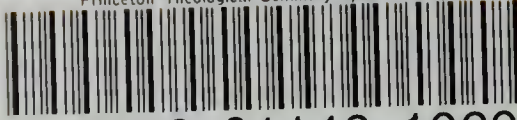
This means, of course, assimilation. We grow like Him. As the cold, black lump of coal, cast into the hot, glowing furnace, becomes hot and glowing too: or as the filth, absorbed by the root of the rose-bush, is itself transformed into a rose: so we, in this loving, trustful union with Christ are changed into the same image.

This, then, is the hope, and the only hope of fallen man; the restoration offered to us all in Christ. Pulling ourselves up in a career of selfishness and sin, we have thought, if we have not said: “If only I could begin again, and set my face towards the goal, untrammelled by the memory and maiming of past mistakes and misdoings!” The wish is

natural enough. If we are to attain, nothing less than this will suffice; and nothing less than this is offered. In the best way we can think of, let us get as near to Jesus as we can, and He will do the rest. With the unspeakable relief of a conscious restoration of friendly relationships with God, will come the evidence of profound changes in the depths of our own nature, leading to a life of holy service. Whatever we may call this—conversion, regeneration, or a new birth—it is just one of a countless host of instances of what Paul said long ago: “If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new.”



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